Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism? The Relevance of the Habermas-Mouffe Debate for Third World Politics

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In recent decades, one cannot have failed to notice the spread of Western liberal democracy throughout the world, whether in Eastern Europe or many parts of the Third World.[1] Yet the ascent of liberal democracy has been accompanied by "ethnic" nationalisms, religious "fundamentalisms," civil wars, and genocide. Furthermore, much as in the West, in those developing countries with already well-entrenched liberal democratic regimes, there has been growing public dissatisfaction with democratic institutions. This unease is evidenced by such phenomena as the rise of popular protest and social movements, lower voter turnout, and the inability of public institutions to meet citizens' demands and needs.

Jürgen Habermas and Chantal Mouffe speak directly to this "crisis of liberal democracy." Both are democratic theorists who, while defending the gains of Western liberal democratic regimes, are critical of them, believing them to be far from sufficient or complete. It is not enough, Habermas and Mouffe contend, to have the outward trimmings and institutions of liberal democracy (elections, parliaments, rule of law, and so on); we also need to ensure the quality and inclusiveness of democratic processes in the multiple spheres of social life and within all public institutions. Many of the sociocultural problems of nationalism, religious resurgence, and popular protest noted above, they argue, are precisely the product of political neglect and exclusion by regimes purporting to be democratic. Thus, both theorists make a compelling argument for the need to deepen or extend democracy.

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However, Habermas and Mouffe differ on how to bring this about. Habermas's vision, which he labels "deliberative democracy," relies on reasoned and inclusive public deliberation that is geared to reaching consensual decisions. His arguments foreground concerns about legitimacy and (universal) justice, concerns that he believes are ignored by poststructuralists at their peril. Mouffe's (poststructuralist) vision of democracy is critical of Habermas's defense of rationality and universalism, believing these to be inimical to pluralist societies. Her "agonistic pluralism" accentuates ways for democratic politics to represent difference. Thus, the debate between the two theorists rests on how best to promote democratic participation and decision making without impeding sociocultural difference. To put it another way, the debate hinges on democratically representing difference without thereby sanctioning injustice and intolerance.

In this article, I call attention to several significant dimensions of the debate. As already noted, while both theorists valorize, criticize, and wish to extend liberal democracy, each does so from a different ontological standpoint.[2] In this sense, each one's differences bring out the strengths and limits of the other's democratic theory. To appropriate Richard Bernstein's words from another context, in many ways, each is "each other's other"; their debate can be seen as an "allegory of the 'modern/postmodern' condition" and is a "juxtaposed rather than an integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle."[3] This being the case, I do not attempt to reconcile the differences between the two theorists or integrate their democratic visions; rather, believing that (and showing) the tensions between them to be irresolvable but fruitful and educative, I treat both theorists agonally to highlight some of the limits, strains, and possibilities of contemporary Third World democratic politics.

As compelling and relevant as Habermas's and Mouffe's democratic theories may be, surprisingly little work has been done to relate these theories to the political challenges of the Third World. A voluminous (and still growing) literature exists on Habermas's critique/vision of Western democracy, but very little exists on its application to the developing world.[4] Mouffe's work fares only slightly better here, primarily through the writings of the "post-development" theorists (especially those of Arturo Escobar),[5] who use Mouffe's work as it relates to new social movements. But nothing exists as yet on the debate between Habermas and Mouffe and its relevance to Third World politics, most likely because the debate is recent.

In what follows, I attempt to fill this gap. However, I do so with qualification and caution. There are limitations in applying First World theories to Third World actualities. In particular, Habermas's and Mouffe's democratic politics do not adequately address issues of particular significance to Third World politics: the legacies of colonialism, the West's hegemony in current global politics, the pivotal role of the (Third World) state, and the impact of material conditions and socioeconomic (in)equality on democratic politics.[6]

The structure of the article reflects the sequence of arguments just laid out. After developing Habermas's views on "deliberative democracy" and Mouffe's counterproposals on "agonistic pluralism," I analyze the relevance of their debate to Third World politics in terms of both what they share and what sets them apart. I then examine the limits, erasures, and gaps in their respective arguments from the perspective of Third World politics.

A final introductory note: the Habermas-Mouffe debate is one that has been constructed chiefly by Mouffe, specifically in two articles (published in 1997 and 1999) and a more recent book (published in 2000)[7] in which she assesses Habermas's recent work on deliberative democracy.[8] To date, Habermas has not replied to Mouffe, although his misgivings about her proposals can be teased out from his (and a number of Habermasian theorists') criticisms of poststructuralist politics. Accordingly, this article will draw not only from the two theorists' recent work but also from the larger body of their work and criticisms of it where appropriate to the debate.

Deliberative Democracy vs. Agonistic Pluralism

Habermas's Deliberative Democracy

In his early writings, Habermas developed the notion of the "public sphere" as a discursive space, distinct and separate from the economy and state, in which citizens participate and act through dialogue and debate.[9] In more recent writings, he elaborates the specifically discursive aspects of this public sphere, arguing for a procedural model of democracy that he labels "deliberative democracy."[10]

For Habermas, in order to encourage public participation and broaden/strengthen democracy, politics must be viewed as a public conversation governed by legitimating procedures and reason: "Democratic will-formation draws its legitimating force . . . from the communicative presuppositions that allow better arguments to come into play in various forms of deliberation and from procedures that

secure fair bargaining processes."[11] Habermas encapsulates these "fair" procedures in what he calls an "ideal speech situation"; that is, a situation in which public dialogue is free and uncoerced. *Democratic deliberation approaches an ideal speech situation if it* satisfies the following formal conditions: (1) it is inclusive (i.e., no one is excluded from participating in the discussion on topics relevant to her/him, and no relevant information is omitted); (2) it is coercion free (i.e., everyone engages in arguments freely, without being dominated or feeling intimidated by other participants); and (3) it is open and symmetrical (each participant can initiate, continue, and question the discussion on any relevant topic, including the deliberative procedures).[12] It is worth noting that while the formal procedures entailed by the ideal speech situation enforce free and uncoerced dialogue, they impose no limits on the scope or agenda of public deliberations: topics are always open, determined only by those participating in the discussions and subject to revision if required.

Habermas recognizes that the ideal speech situation is not easy to bring about. He is aware that there are many obstacles standing in its way, not the least of which is trying to minimize power *relationships among participants. For him, the ideal speech situation is* not empirical: it is a regulative idea, a counterfactual stance from which to assess and criticize nondeliberative processes and power politics.

In recent writings, as a way of better guaranteeing, regulating, and expanding deliberative democracy, Habermas argues for the institutionalization through legal and constitutional means of these legitimating rules.[13] According to him, laws enacting "fair" procedures can help organize democratic politics. For example, they can delineate, regulate, and check state powers to ensure better account*ability of public institutions; in turn, this will help protect the pub*lic sphere from being overly influenced and colonized by state administrative and technocratic interests.

Habermas seeks not simply legitimating procedures, but just outcomes as well. For this purpose, he resorts to the use of reason. Yet for him, rationality cannot be autonomous, insulated from society and imposing its will without accountability; it must be a dialogical or "communicative" rationality through which participants advance arguments and counterarguments. Consensual decisions are reached only by the (unforced) "force of the better argument," so that, at the end of the deliberative process, all concerned are convinced by the decisions reached and accept them as reasonable.[14] Like the discussion topics, these decisions can be revisited when information and participants change.

Several dimensions of this process are worth dwelling upon. First, communicative rationality not only helps coordinate information, plans, or actions but performs an important critical and adjudicative function. By making speakers give (or test) reasons for the claims they advance, deliberative democracy enables participants to criticize unsubstantiated or unconvincing claims and distinguish between better and worse claims. Decisions reached are "right" because they are supported by good reasons. Second, it is not the status of the speaker that counts, but the force of the speaker's arguments. Reason prevails over power. In this sense, Habermas complements his legitimating rules (noted above) with communicative rationality to criticize and minimize power inequalities within the deliberative public space.

Finally, Habermas upholds the quality—the quasi- transcendental quality[15]—of public deliberation. For him, just outcomes are reached through "higher-level intersubjectivity of communication processes."[16] Decisions happen not by aggregating individual preferences, adding votes, or finding commonalities; rather, each participant begins with his or her interests, and through the course of deliberations transcends these interests to seek the good of all. Thus, the outcomes represent a movement from "mere agreement" to "rational consensus."[17]

It is such (quasi-)transcendence that gives consensual decisions their universal appeal, since all participants discover norms that are generalizable (or potentially generalizable) and accept them as universally binding. To this end, Habermas prioritizes morality (the domain of impartial procedures and universal right/justice) over ethics (the domain of differing conceptions of the personal and social good, or the "good life");[18] he argues for the need for communities to distance themselves from their taken-for-granted beliefs and traditions so that they bring "universal principles of justice into the horizon of the specific form of life of [the] particular community."[19] As a consequence, communicative rationality's transcendent qualities form the basis of his defense of justice and universalization.

Mouffe's Agonistic Pluralism

Mouffe enters the debate with Habermas equipped with a different set of priorities: hers is a postmodern world that valorizes antagonism and pluralism (both terms explained below), and is suspicious of such notions as rationality and consensus. She is critical of Habermas on several grounds. Using Wittgenstein's argument that rules are integral to specific and shared forms of community life, she questions Habermas's separation of procedure from substance:

Distinctions between "procedural" and "substantial" or between "moral" and "ethical" that are central to the Habermasian approach cannot be maintained and one must acknowledge that procedures always involve substantial ethical commitments.[20]

In other words, one would first have to agree on the specific "language game" (or community worldview) being used before one could agree on the rules of deliberation; as a result, any agreement on rules would already contain substantive (cultural or ethical) designs.

In the same vein, Mouffe questions Habermas's notion of consensus: as language games/community life forms are incommensurable, participants hailing from different communities would sometimes be talking at cross-purposes. Any agreement they come to would then be more the product of power politics or clever rhetoric than real consensus. She quotes Wittgenstein here to make her point:

> Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with another, then each man declares the other a fool and an heretic. I said I would "combat" the other man, but wouldn't I give him reasons? certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons comes *persuasion*.[21]

Finally, Mouffe deploys arguments by Lacan (as well as Zizek and Derrida) to criticize Habermas's notion of the ideal speech situation. The symbolic field, for her, is made up of free-floating signifiers, rendering the establishment of any discourse authoritarian: meaning can happen only by advancing a master signifier, at the expense and exclusion of other signifiers. Habermas's attempt to arrive at a coercion-free deliberative sphere is thus doomed to failure, according to her. She writes that "far from being merely empirical, or epistemological, the obstacles to the realization of the ideal speech situation are ontological."[22] The same argument is used to buttress her earlier criticism of consensus, which she believes is a distortion of the symbolic field,[23] made possible only by shutting out something or someone from the deliberative process (more on this point later).

It is important to note that the Lacanian arguments just used by Mouffe against Habermas are ones that ground/frame her work. The view that the symbolic field is constituted by a chain of signifiers and that the establishment of meaning is an interruption or distortion of it gives way to two important Mouffean notions: "antagonism" and "pluralism." Antagonisms are the limits that show up through any act of closure or when constituting any totality

(e.g., "meaning," "discourse," "objectivity," "society"). For her, such limits are integral to politics, or, put differently, conflict and contestation are the stuff of politics. She writes that "antagonism is constitutive and irreducible," which is why, according to her, Habermas's attempt to banish it from deliberative democracy "erases the dimension of the political."[24] Thus, for example, the formation of an identity—be it individual or collective—is an act of power requiring an I/you or us/them distinction, thereby setting up an adversarial relationship to the other.

"Pluralism" refers to the fact that society is an open and discursive field, giving way to multiple social identities (although, because each social identity is an abbreviation of this discursive field, it is also nonessential, contingent, precarious). For Mouffe, this plurality of the social, this diversity of values and identities, is not just a "fact"; it is crucial to the "symbolic ordering of social relations": pluralism is the "defining feature of modern democracy. . . . It is taken to be constitutive *at the conceptual level* of the very nature of modern democracy."[25]

The challenge is instituting a democratic regime that allows for the expression of social plurality. "Radical democracy," writes Mouffe, "demands that we acknowledge difference."[26] However, she does not have in mind here a regime that sanctions unlimited incommensurability or the relativistic play of difference: rather, she sees social antagonism as giving way to a democratic "logic of equivalence," as a result of which the mutual contestation between different social groups changes the identity of each of these groups.[27] A pluralist democracy for her is one in which there is constant struggle and renegotiation of social identity.

Mouffe's "agonistic pluralism" is the application of this "logic of equivalence" to social pluralism. When democratic politics transform "antagonistic" relations between "enemies" into "agonistic" relations between "adversaries," we have "agonistic pluralism":

> To come to accept the position of the adversary is to undergo a radical change in political identity, it has more of a quality of a conversion than of rational persuasion [à la Habermas] . . . compromises are possible; they are part of the process of politics. But they should be seen as temporary respites in an ongoing confrontation. . . . [Hence we] could say that the aim of democratic politics is to transform an "antagonism" into an "agonism."[28]

According to Mouffe, the lack of closure in politics, the "ongoing confrontation," is to be seen not in a negative light but as a marker of the vibrancy and pluralism of democracy.

Although in her recent writings Mouffe does not go into the specifics of this vision of a pluralist democracy, it is clear from her earlier writings, especially *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (coauthored with Ernesto Laclau), that she is advocating the need for an expansion of democracy into the multiple facets of people's lives (work, home, health, education, culture, sex, etc.). She sees this trend being concretized in the rise of new social movements and their politicization of sociocultural spaces heretofore ignored or excluded by mainstream democratic regimes. The challenge, she believes, is "the creation of a chain of equivalence among democratic demands found in a variety of groups—women, blacks, workers, gays, lesbians, environmentalists."[20]

To conclude this section, a brief reflection once again on the above debate and my treatment of it in the remainder of this article: As noted earlier, in many ways, the Habermas-Mouffe argument can be seen as a stand-in for the modern-postmodern argument, with Habermas defending reason, legitimacy, justice, universality, Mouffe defending antagonism, pluralism, contingency. Habermas's political vision is relatively smooth, believing as he does that social complexity is manageable given legitimating procedures and communicative rationality; whereas Mouffe's is more messy, characterized by ongoing contestation between plural social groups. That is not to say that these theorists share nothing; for instance, as noted at the outset and as the next section elaborates, both are concerned about the failures of liberal democracy and finding ways to further the democratic revolution. Therefore, in the remainder of the article I treat their debate along two parallel dimensions. On the one hand, heeding Habermas, I define a few areas on which the two theorists concur, despite their ontological differences. On the other hand, heeding Mouffe, I treat the areas of disagreement between the two agonally. The idea here is not to champion one theorist over the other but to preserve and analyze their relative differences so as to bring out the strengths and limits of each.

The Relevance of the Debate to Third World Politics

The two parallel dimensions of the debate will be specified in relation to Third World politics, of course. Accordingly, in this section we begin by developing two shared areas of concern as they relate to Third World politics: (1) a nonprescriptive and critical politics, and (2) the need to deepen liberal democracy. We then consider

three areas of disagreement: (1) over questions of difference; (2) over legitimacy; and (3) over the adjudication of difference.

Nonprescriptive yet Critical Democratic Politics

Both Mouffe and Habermas put forth a democratic politics that is nonprescriptive but critical. These are important qualities for Third World politics, given the West's history of foisting ideologies and development plans on Third World societies; and given the centralized and sometimes autocratic decision making of state bureaucracies in many of these countries. Mouffe's democratic politics is open-ended and antiauthoritarian. As mentioned earlier, for her, democracy is by definition pluralist, decentered and decentralized. It makes politics incumbent on as wide a participation as possible. It is thus inimical to, and critical of, any Westernizing/universalizing narratives or top-down and totalizing state policies.

Arturo Escobar's views epitomize this Mouffean critique, applying it to Third World issues. Partly inspired by her work, and relying on many of the same poststructuralist sources that her work draws upon (e.g., Foucault, Derrida), Escobar carries out an anti-essentialist critique of the "discourse of development."[30] He argues that such a discourse, framed in a way that champions Western priorities and interests and excludes non-Western ones, furthers Western dominance over the Third World. Development is deployed, for example, to mean Western economic and technological development, thereby making "progress" in the Third World dependent on the import of Western knowhow and technology. Development, for Escobar, far from aiding people, ends up disciplining them and subjugating them to the dictates of Western or Westernized elites. In a Mouffean vein, he upholds popular/new social movements as a way to counter this authoritarian type of discourse and politics (more on this point later).

Like Mouffe's, Habermas's democratic vision is open-ended. His proceduralism means that deliberative democracy refrains from limiting the public agenda or imposing upon it blueprints—be they external, Western ones or programs sponsored by Third World states. Power is thus decentralized. In fact, he is critical of the "liberal" view of society centered on the state—a state that promotes market economics and embodies the "ethical community." His democratic theory envisions a "decentered society"—one in which the political system has no center.[31] As noted earlier, for Habermas, deliberative politics happens in the formal electoral bodies and the state bureaucracy, but also in the multiple formal

and informal networks of the public sphere. Privileging none, he entrusts all social sectors to make up the public agenda dialogically.

The Limits of Liberal Democracy and the Deepening of Democracy

To the extent that liberal democracy is firmly implanted in some parts of the Third World and in others is taking root, Habermas's and Mouffe's defense and critique of it are appropriate and relevant (in this sense, the First World/Third World distinction does not apply, at least not for the present: their First World democratic theories translate well in Third World contexts. Both of them believe that the democratic gains everywhere have been hard fought and hence must be valorized.

But liberal democratic institutions cannot be taken for granted. As Mouffe states, "It is always necessary to fortify them and defend them."[32] Habermas hones in, in particular, on the fact that while such democratic institutions as parliaments are important, they can be weighted down by custom, by unquestioned procedures, and so begin to lose their legitimacy.[33] Often, he argues, governments and electoral bodies assume popular consent after the votes are cast, making important decisions without adequate accountability (e.g., on market liberalization, privatization, structural adjustment) or in bowing to the power of elites and the tyranny of the majority. Moreover, as noted above, state bureaucracies that wield substantial power and resources can, while purporting to be public institutions, often dispense their favors in a top-down and authoritarian fashion, without recourse by citizens. Thus, for Habermas and Mouffe, not only do liberal democratic institutions fail to deliver adequately on such liberal goals as participation and freedom but sometimes they can even foreclose avenues for public contestation and redress.

One way out, as noted, is the politicization (or the reinvigoration) of public spaces to act as a check and counterweight to state and market power. Both theorists pay particular attention to giving voice to, and overturning the subordination of, minorities and marginalized groups (e.g., "ethnic"/cultural minorities, women, and new immigrants). Habermas argues for the additional need to democratize state administrations. He believes that opening up an administration to public participation, scrutiny, and contestation is crucial to deepening democracy.[34]

Questions of Difference

Turning to the issues that separate Habermas and Mouffe, there is, first, the question of representing *difference/pluralism* in democracy.

This, the question that tops Mouffe's agenda, she believes is Habermas's Achilles' heel. Habermas, for his part, acknowledges value pluralism and the need to arrive at outcomes despite difference. His deliberative democracy is intended precisely to allow for plural viewpoints to be heard and adjudicated. Yet, besides Mouffe, others (such as Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser, and Iris Marion Young)[35] have accused him of erasing difference. The problem, it is alleged, is that the exercise of seeking a single consensus and overcoming ethical/cultural backgrounds can silence and marginalize some community members. In defining a consensus and transcending tradition, the tendency is to simplify community, to represent it in unidimensional ways; this makes the attainment of results easier, but risks imposing or coercing consensus. And this is exactly Mouffe's counsel when she argues that a morality/ethics separation and the establishment of any closure de facto entail exclusion. She thus warns Habermas "against the illusion that a fully achieved democracy could ever be instantiated."[36]

The problem here can be illustrated in different ways and by way of several examples. The first example hails from participatory development programs, which, while inclusive of women, may end up silencing them. Indeed, as does deliberative democracy, these programs value and privilege public debate and communication. Yet some cultures or sociopolitical environments devalue women's public roles, moving them to be passive to men. This is all the more the case when sensitive issues such as rape, violence, or sex are discussed publicly.[37] The result is that women participants either resort to letting men articulate their concerns or, as David Mosse points out (relying mainly on evidence from programs in India), they "have to clothe their ideas and encode their desires in particular ways to make them heard and accepted as legitimate in the public domain. . . . But often, their particular concerns do not find place in the consensus."[38]

Similar feminist concerns have been raised by Western democratic theorists (Fraser, Benhabib).[39] And similar problems are broached in relation to disadvantaged classes or "ethnic" and "racial" groups, who may lack the sense of "entitlement" and assertiveness in the public sphere that is enjoyed by privileged classes and groups. This lacuna may be much greater for those who endure multiple sociocultural disadvantages (e.g., lower caste and "tribal" women in India; indigenous and mestizo people in Latin America).[40]

As a check against power inequalities and intimidation in the public sphere, Habermas of course has the ideal speech situation and communicative rationality, but feminists and others doubt that his procedures and rationality *can* "level the playing field" in

a public space, especially under the pressure of seeking consensus. For people unable to voice their opinions sufficiently (for gender, sociocultural, or other reasons), can these Habermasian measures adequately compensate? Can they enable people to overcome entrenched taboos and roles and arrive at universally satisfactory decisions? The examples cited above belie Habermas's confidence in procedures and rationality.

In some cases, it is not even desirable to "transcend" cultural and ethical life. Once again it is feminists, speaking about both First World and Third World women's issues, who point out that privileging the public sphere results in undervaluing the significance of the private sphere.[41] This is an important consideration in societies with an unequal gender division of labor: transcendence of the ethical/personal can end up legitimizing women's oppression in the home and prevent the problem from being addressed and resolved in the political/public sphere. Thus, women's inclusion in Habermas's deliberative democracy would be no guarantee of the representation of their concerns in decision making.

Similar problems can occur in the cultural domain. Habermas's defense of the moral over the ethical realm implies the overcoming of particularities, including one's own cultural background. Yet in countries with cultural minorities, this stance can amount to asking minorities to suppress their language or religion, which may already be under threat from the majoritarian culture. The same is true of the fate of Third World cultures in the current global conjuncture. The rapid spread of capitalist values and Western media ("Westernization") threatens these cultures, especially minoritarian ones. Under such circumstances, as Fred Dallmayr emphasizes, transcendence and proceduralism may

> conceal [the] cultural hegemony [of the West]. In order for transformative learning to occur, agents have to proceed from a distinct position or background. . . . In seeking to promote "universal" standards, including the principle of universal rights, Western culture paradoxically tends to foster monolingual conformity [e.g. the hegemony of English as a language] that is at variance with rights (or rightness). Precisely under democratic auspices, non-Western societies and people must be able to speak or "write back"—and they must be able to do so in their native tongue, which invariably is part of their cultural fabric or tradition.[42]

Thus, under conditions of Western hegemony, Habermas's "impartial" procedures and "universally binding" communicative rationality may not be so neutral and universal after all; in fact, they may mask both Western hegemony and non-Western cultural extinction.

As a way out of these Habermasian problems (of championing consensus over heterogeneity, public over private, moral over ethical), several critics have suggested "friendly" amendments to his work (and Habermas appears to have heeded these critics on some issues).[43] Jane Mansbridge, while upholding the deliberative aspects of Habermas's *democratic vision, speaks of "informal deliberative enclaves of resistance* in which those who lose in each coercive move can rework their ideas and strategies, gathering their forces and deciding in a more protected space in what way or whether to continue the battle."[44] Similarly, Nancy Fraser argues for "subaltern counterpublics," which like Mansbridge's "informal deliberative enclaves" are multiple deliberative spaces, but linked deliberatively through lateral alliances and networks.[45]

These suggestions appear to avert the problems of having a single consensus and prioritizing *the moral over the ethical by not* lumping marginalized or disadvantaged groups with everyone else: each group has its own sphere, and in it, if it so wishes, it may decide to scrutinize its cultural/ethical norms; if it deems it necessary, it may seek to protect or strengthen them. The challenge nonetheless remains deliberatively linking the different spheres: if such linkage is accomplished through compromise, as opposed to consensus, Habermas warns the result may be an implicit or explicit endorsement of inequality. Indeed, "mere agreement," without support of good arguments and reasons, *could mean the* exclusion by elites of the very disadvantaged and marginalized groups that Habermas's critics are concerned about in the first place.[46]

Mansbridge responds by stating that the practice of deliberative democracy must not demand absolute legitimacy, only "rough" or "good enough" legitimacy.[47] And Seyla Benhabib adds that a lack of consensus is not necessarily negative; for it can yield better mutual understanding among participants and the agreement to disagree.[48]

Mouffe, it should be pointed out, while not sharing the theoretical underpinnings of these revisionist Habermasians, appears to endorse their proposal for multiple public spaces and toleration of dissensus. In this regard, she writes that "pluralist politics should be envisaged as a 'mixed-game,' that is, in part collaborative and in part conflictual and not as a wholly co-operative game as most liberals would have it."[49]

The debate over the proposal for multiple public spheres aside, there are practical implications of the proposal for Third World politics. For instance, the idea would be for (national or international) development programs to refrain from seeking

single results in favor of temporary and multiple outcomes. In turn, this would imply multipronged programming to meet the needs of plural audiences, rather than unidimensional programming that serves some and leaves the rest high and dry. Of course, such proposals are not easily realized. It is beyond the scope of this article to examine their practicability in any detail, but the proposals would probably require greater access to already limited resources (human, institutional, environmental) so as to cater simultaneously to multiple publics. In addition, they would necessitate new and democratic institutional forms—coordinated yet plural and flexible institutions that can represent changing and diverse audiences.[50]

Questions of Legitimating Procedures

The second area of disagreement sees Habermas turning the tables on Mouffe. While Habermas promotes a decentered democratic system and hence decentralized participatory politics, his *legitimating procedures* and communicative rationality ensure taking a critical and broad perspective of such politics.

Mouffe's agonistic pluralism, while also accentuating local and decentralized democracy, has no legitimating force and breadth of perspective. In fact, Mohan and Stokke argue that her politics have a tendency to "essentialise and romanticise 'the local.'"[51] This "localism," they point out, stems from her postmodern inclination to celebrate pluralism (especially the activities of marginalized groups) without sufficiently problematizing it (or them).

Escobar has been accused of these same tendencies.[52] He, too, is said to romanticize Third World popular protest groups and new social movements by assuming they are benign and progressive. Yet there is much evidence that, while many such movements are internally and externally democratic, several are not. Examples here include right-wing Hindu and Islamic movements in South Asia, xenophobic Hutu and Tutsi groups and communities in Central Africa, and violent left-wing groups in Colombia. Many of these movements/groups/communities are co-opted by the (usually authoritarian) state and are internally undemocratic, sexist, and homophobic.[53] There is also ample evidence of development organizations and programs that have the trappings of a participatory politics but are manipulated by elites (through intimidation and power politics) at the expense of poor/marginalized people.[54]

Since Mouffe stands against the relativistic play of difference, her politics are clearly opposed to such tendencies.[55] Unfortunately, she does not support her stand; she criticizes Habermas's

legitimating procedures on ontological grounds, but has no alternative rule-making system to offer in their place. Instead, she resorts to her democratic "logic of equivalence": "But this struggle will not be one between 'enemies' but among 'adversaries,' since all participants will recognize the positions of others in the contest as legitimate ones." And: "What we need is a hegemony of democratic values, and this requires a multiplication of democratic practices."[36] But a lot is unexplained here: where do her imperative constructions—"all participants will recognize" and "we need"— come from? on what are they based? what will compel these groups to act democratically? what will guarantee or impel their legitimacy? In the absence of answers to these questions, it is difficult to interpret Mouffe's "logic of equivalence" as anything other than voluntarism. She appears satisfied that social movements and protest groups will by themselves discover and practice democratic citizenship, in spite of evidence (noted above) to the contrary. It is no wonder, then, that Habermas insists on legitimating procedures and communicative action. Their absence in Mouffe's agonistic pluralism risks condoning authoritarian behavior and decisions or practices that are participatory only in name (that is, that reflect "mere agreement," as opposed to "rational consensus").

Recall that Habermas insists as well on the institutionalization of legitimating procedures. According to him, the lack of such institutionalization, like the lack of the procedures themselves, may be costly. This argument is confirmed by David Mosse, who shows that when participatory development is informal and without rules, it can raise doubt and mistrust on the part of communities. Mosse points to the suspicion of participation by "tribal" people in Madhya Pradesh, India, quoting a "tribal" woman as saying, "Today you are sitting on the ground [participating with us], tomorrow [what is to stop you from] sitting on our heads?"[37] Participation often appears strange and foreign to some communities, and its informality can bolster this impression.

More serious, though, is that the absence of institutionalized procedures in participatory politics may put the onus for legitimacy on the commitment of its practitioners: groups have to come up with the rules themselves (which is what Mouffe's "voluntarism" implies). But such an eventuality can have gender implications. Feminist commentators have underlined that community women's working days can be very long (relative to men's), preventing them from adequately participating in local politics. Accordingly, the extra time burden implied by an informal and procedureless participatory politics could stretch their days even longer, further aggravating both the gender division of labor and women's participation rates.[38]

Thus, the lack of procedures and the absence of their institutionalization can weaken democratic politics. As Habermas points out, the success of deliberative democracy depends "not on a collectively acting citizenry but on the institutionalization of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication." Such institutionalization allows citizens to deliberate in informal public spheres, or in what Habermas calls "simple and episodic encounters."[59] As a consequence, the formality of legitimating procedures provides deliberative democracy with an informal dimension, reflecting its embeddedness in people's daily encounters and interactions—whereas, ironically, agonistic pluralism's informality and lack of procedures risks making community life overly formal, thus encumbering and interrupting people's daily lives.

Questions of Adjudication of Difference

A final, related, area of disagreement between the two theorists concerns the task of adjudicating between "differences." Again, Habermasian deliberative democracy appears particularly well suited to this task, since the prime functions of communicative rationality are to help obtain an "enlarged" view, distinguish between differing claims, and decide which claims are "better." Foremost in Habermas's mind is the need to be able to differentiate between legitimate/just and illegitimate/unjust claims.

In contrast, and in spite of also being concerned about intolerant and undemocratic practice, Mouffe's politics appear ill-suited to this adjudicative task. Her tendency to value "localism" prevents taking a broad perspective on politics, and, as argued by Mohan and Stokke, risks underestimating wider political economy structures and ignoring their role in the creation of socioeconomic inequality, intolerance, and so on.[60] Moreover, Mouffe's (postmodern) critique of reason and lack of alternative means of "transcendence" leaves her with no way of either defending democratic practices or questioning undemocratic ones.

As Seyla Benhabib submits, "How can theorists of agonistic democracy safeguard freedom and justice, respect for human rights of citizens as equal and free beings, if they are unwilling to place constraints that bind, trump, limit, and otherwise confine the will of the sovereign people?"[61] Similarly, I ask: What enables Mouffe to critique, say, xenophobia, or adjudicate between, say, a Gandhian and a neoliberal environmentalism?

In fact, Mouffe does provide a response to the second question. She denies that there is any Archimedean point from which to adjudicate which differences (so to speak) make a difference:

> It is always possible to distinguish between the just and the unjust, the legitimate and the illegitimate, but this can only be done from within a given tradition, with the help of standards that tradition provides; in fact there is no point of view external to all traditions from which one can offer a universal judgement.[62]

However, this (Wittgensteinian) response is of little help when one has to decide between claims hailing from two or more different traditions.

Mouffe's implication is that one cannot do so, and without an adjudicative mechanism she appears once again to be able only to retreat into a voluntaristic politics: "[C]ertain differences are constructed as relations of subordination and should therefore be challenged by a radical democratic politics."[63] As was the case earlier, it is difficult to attribute this "should therefore be challenged" clause to much more than a kind of voluntarism, a voluntarism that is not immanent to her agonistic pluralism but is external to it: an add-on. Benhabib is less kind; she puts Mouffe's taking-democratic-behavior-for-granted down to circular argumentation: "[A]ntifoundationalist theories of democracy are circular in that they either posit or simply take for granted precisely those moral and political norms of citizens' equality, freedom, and democratic legitimacy for the justification of which what are dubbed 'foundationalist' models were developed in the first place."[64]

To conclude this section, a brief review of the fault lines in the Habermas-Mouffe debate. We have seen that both theorists share common concerns about liberal democracy and both advocate extending democracy to the multiple spheres of social and political life. However, we have also considered the sharp differences between the two theorists. Applying a Mouffean lens to Habermas exposes his difficulties in democratically representing sociocultural pluralism; whereas applying a Habermasian lens to Mouffe reveals the weaknesses of her democratic politics on questions of legitimacy and adjudication of difference. The primacy that Mouffe gives to pluralism shows up Habermas's depreciation of it in his theory; while the primacy that Habermas gives to legitimacy and justice shows up Mouffe's avoidance of them in hers.

Thus, as noted earlier, each theorist brings out the limits of the other. The implication for Third World politics is that endorsing both Mouffe's critique of Habermas and her agonistic pluralism would mean accepting the associated risks and costs of voluntarism and relativism; and on the other side, sanctioning both Habermas's critique of poststructuralism and his deliberative democracy would mean supporting his tendency toward the erasure of difference.

That is why engaging with both theorists agonally, rather than championing one or the other, is more fruitful, for it helps tease out the tensions in Third World democratic politics between such issues as consensus and difference, pluralism and justice, universalism and particularity.

Limits, Erasures, Gaps

A final dimension also requires examination: the extent of the fit between Habermas's and Mouffe's theories and Third World politics. I have argued that their democratic visions and their debate are compelling and relevant; but I would like now to explore the limits of my own argument. I propose to do so by investigating, first, the extent to which their theories are inappropriate, given their First World origins; second, their theories' neglect of the Third World and Western imperialism; and third, some of the gaps that need closing to make their theories more relevant to Third World politics.

Inappropriate?

Looking into the question of appropriateness of Western democratic theory for the Third World seems important since, as touched on earlier, anything cross-cultural in the current global conjuncture is suspect for masking Western imperialist designs. This problem may be said to apply less to Mouffe than Habermas. Hers is a decidedly Western-focused theory relying on Western philosophic traditions, but she refrains from championing any type of universalism. As already underlined, her democratic theory is nonprescriptive and open, and given the spread of Western liberal democracy, what she has to say about democratic regimes in the West applies equally to democracies elsewhere in the world (it is what she does *not* say that requires some comment; see below).

While I have argued that the same is true of Habermas, some qualifications are necessary (since, in contrast to Mouffe, he *does* prescribe a form of universalism). Dallmayr argues that Habermas tends to have an evolutionary-teleological theory of modernization/rationalization that "dovetail[s] too neatly with the progressive ascendancy and domination of Western science and technology around the globe."[65] The implication is that Habermas's use of communicative rationality for deliberative democracy is possible only in "modern" (presumably Western) societies, which have overcome "theological/mythological" symbolization.

Richard Bernstein and Stephen White disagree with this reading; Bernstein specifically accusing Dallmayr of misconstruing Habermas.[66] For Bernstein, Habermas has been a vigorous critic of positivism throughout his work and has rejected any philosophy of history that stipulates a teleological narrative. Similarly, White states that

> Habermas wants his theory of social evolution to identify universal, modern structures of rationality in such a manner that they can be separated from . . . Western modernization which Weber described. His theory thus maintains a critical distance from Western societies in a way which (if the theory stands up) might lessen the suspicion that it is simply promoting conceptual imperialism under the guise of universalism.[67]

In my view, both readings of Habermas are possible, depending on whether one reads his earlier or later work. His later work is proceduralist and, in spite of the constraints noted in the previous section, is at least conducive to an open and nonprescriptive democracy.[68] Here, as we have seen, Habermas stipulates that only participants in deliberative democracy, no matter where they come from, can decide on the norms of the debate. However, his earlier work is more historical, and although critical of positivism/teleology it locates the development of the public sphere and rationalization in historically specific Western institutions.[69]

White may be correct in arguing that Habermas is ultimately drawing out what he believes are universal rational structures, thus distancing communicative reason from "Western reason"; it remains, nonetheless, that Habermas's point of reference is Western, not non-Western, history. Had Habermas supplemented his views with historical analyses of non-Western societies, and had his conception of rationalization not so neatly coincided with Western historical development, perhaps doubts about his universalist arguments would be minimized.

The Erasure of the Third World and Western Imperialism?

Neither Habermas nor Mouffe take the Third World or Western colonialism/imperialism into consideration in their democratic theories. It may be objected that they cannot be expected to cover everything: it is enough that they have analyzed and condemned a range of Western democratic institutions. However, given that both subscribe to a critical and antiauthoritarian politics, it is curious that neither has devoted any space in their sizable (in the case of

Habermas, voluminous) writings to the question of the West's relationship to the Third World.[70]

Mouffe's critique of Western liberalism, it seems to me, would be strengthened by highlighting its complicity with colonialism and neocolonialism. Habermas's own critique of modernity would also gain from this type of analysis. Yet, his silence on the issue is perplexing. In this regard, Edward Said wonders how the Frankfurt school (to which Habermas purportedly owes allegiance), in spite of its critique of domination in modern Western society, is "stunningly silent on racist theory, anti-imperialist resistance, and oppositional practice in the empire."[71] And Said is exasperated that Habermas, when asked in an interview about the importance of anti-imperialist and anticapitalist struggles to democratic socialism in the advanced capitalist world, declares that he "would rather pass the question" even though he is "aware of the fact that this is a eurocentrically limited view."[72]

It is difficult to interpret this silence on the part of both theorists as anything other than erasure. It is as though, for them, the Third World and colonialism/imperialism are invisible or are insignificant to the development of Western democratic institutions.[73] Habermas's advocacy of universal justice is thus made more suspect. And Mouffe appears equally incredulous (on this question). She criticizes Habermas's universalism, but the absence in her work of any meaningful treatment of First World/Third World issues and Western imperialism can be read precisely as masking a type of universalism: it is as if she is claiming radical democracy can be practiced unfettered by the fact that it is constructed on the ruins of Western colonial/imperial history.

Gaps

Finally, from the perspective of Third World politics, there are at least two gaps in Habermas's and Mouffe's democratic theory: insufficient attention to materiality and the lack of importance given to the state. In what follows, I do not claim to be exhaustive; I propose only to sketch the broad outlines of these two dimensions.

1. *The importance of economic/material conditions.* The inadequate emphasis given to the economic dimensions of democratic politics is more a Mouffean than a Habermasian problem. In Mouffe's case, the difficulty stems from the privileged place her work extends to the "symbolic field." Although she does not discount labor or economic struggles, her tendency is to valorize "postmaterialist" struggles and, as noted earlier, the need to reconfigure symbolic, ethicocultural

discourses. In the Third World context (some would argue in the First World context as well), her priority is out of kilter with the extent of socioeconomic inequality and the prevalence of inequality-related struggles.

Escobar's work deals with the Third World context, but falls prey to the same Mouffean tendencies. As already highlighted, he champions "antidevelopment" resistance and emphasizes the identity/cultural politics of new social movements.[74] But his critics point out that he fails to recognize the diversity of issues among these movements, and that many of them, far from being "antidevelopment" or cultural, are livelihood movements fighting for better access "to" development (to education, environment, health, etc.).[75] Escobar may thus be said to be transposing (Mouffean) radical democratic theory to the Third World too indiscriminately and uncritically. And as a result, to use Mohan and Stokke's words, his work (and Mouffe's) appears to require "a more complete analysis of the relations between materiality and identity."[76]

Although Habermas has tended to be relatively silent on economic issues in his recent work, they feature prominently in the rest of his writings. He is well aware of the need to link materiality to symbolization and that deliberative democracy is meaningless unless there is a modicum of socioeconomic equality among participants. He talks of the need to guarantee basic/positive rights (such as welfare rights) to protect the individual's ability to speak and communicate.[77] In this sense, as Bernstein notes, "Habermas has never backed away from the Marxist legacy in arguing that a society in which undistorted communication is embodied in everyday life requires a transformation of economic, social, and political institutions."[78]

The problem, in the Third World context especially, is that such a transformation is easier said than done. Socioeconomic inequalities tend to be much bigger in the Third World than in the West. This puts a much greater onus on Habermas's ideal speech situation to "level the playing field." The risks that socioeconomic elites will manipulate and impose consensus are heavier and more difficult to minimize. Moreover, as so many disagreements in developing countries center on (economic or resource) distribution questions, Habermas sets the bar unreasonably high by demanding consensual outcomes, as opposed to compromise. Indeed, when it comes to livelihood and survival issues, participants tend to be very polarized, making it extremely arduous to achieve even compromise. Habermas has come to recognize this problem, admitting that distributional conflicts may after all require some give-and-take on both sides.[79]

2. *The significance of the state and transnational governance.* The state plays a crucial role in Third World politics. Unlike in the West, it is (and has been) by far the main source of socioeconomic investment in the developing world. It often intervenes to address inequalities and protect the rights of poor/marginalized people and minorities against private interests and majoritarian power. And it frequently plays an important part in directing and monitoring foreign multinational investment. On the negative side, the state can also be (and has been) an obstacle to democracy, sometimes having a monopoly on power and violence and using it to impose market liberalization, "ethnic" nationalism, or bureaucratic authoritarianism. Addressing the role of the Third World state is, therefore, important to any democratic theory.

Once again, Habermas (on this issue) comes out looking better than Mouffe. As already emphasized, both theorists are critical of state bureaucratic/technocratic authoritarianism. However, unlike Mouffe, Habermas devotes a lot of attention to ways of strengthening liberal democracy's civic and political institutions and democratizing its administrative organs so that state power is made more discursive and accountable. While suspicious of state abuse and its manipulation by private and corporate elites, Habermas is a defender of state welfarism. In contrast, Mouffe offers little in terms of a positive role for the state. She advocates decentering politics and fighting state suppression of the popular sectors, but she shies away from proffering specific ways in which the state can be made more responsive. This absence only adds fuel to suspicions about the voluntarism and narrow decentralization implied by her politics.

But if Mouffe's work lacks adequate theorization about the state, neither theorist has much to say about the issue of transnational governance.[80] Perhaps more than ever, this is a burning issue for Third World countries. Its importance is evidenced by continuing Western global hegemony and the loss of national control resulting from a host of occurrences—the extraterritorial powers of multinational corporations, the activities of transnational actors (NGOs, multilateral and international organizations), the heightened imbrication of issues (health, environment, agriculture, migration) across the globe, and the increasing commodification of myriad aspects of people's daily lives. More than ever, Western hegemony and the loss of Third World national control point to a need for transnational democratic governance. This entails the democratization and greater accountability of existing global governance institutions (such as the Bretton Woods institutions)[81] and the establishment of new and democratic ones (like a world environmental organization and court).

In a Habermasian vein, one can therefore make an argument for the enlargement of the public sphere to accommodate for such trans/postnationalism; this would mean, for example, instituting civic participation in the drafting of international rules for, and the monitoring of, not only NGO activities (which, as pointed out earlier, can also be undemocratic, although arguably less so than corporate activities) but also multinational corporate investment. But in a Mouffean vein, one would quickly need to warn against the tendency toward the totalization of transnational governance that such a Habermasian enlargement would involve and against the corresponding risk of excluding pluralism within the global public sphere(s).

<center>* * *</center>

What emerges from the above discussion is that while the Habermas-Mouffe debate on radical democracy translates well into the Third World context, there are important differences between First and Third World democracies that constrain any automatic translation. These differences—the extent of socioeconomic inequality, the pivotal position of the state, continuing patterns of subjugation to the West—are what make the First World/Third World distinction necessary. In other words, given the current spread of Western models of democracy throughout the globe, Mouffe and Habermas's First World democratic theories, despite their open and nonprescriptive qualities, can be projected onto other parts of the world only up to a point.

What emerges as well is that it is necessary not just to introduce these important Third World "differences" in polite conversation with Habermas's and Mouffe's democratic theories and then identify or bridge the relevant gaps/absences; rather, I have found it necessary also to *confront* (in as it were an "agonal hermeneutic" manner) Habermas and Mouffe with these differences so as to unearth the existence of erasures in their work—notably, their (complicit) silence on the Third World and on Western imperialism/colonialism.[82] To do so is not to devalue the importance and relevance of their work to Third World politics but to recognize some limits to it and, perhaps more importantly, to begin the task of writing the Third World into it, opening it up, prodding it to listen to the Third World other(s).

Notes

The opening words of the title of this article replicate those of Chantal Mouffe's "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" *Social Research* 66, no. 3 (1999).

My thanks to Navin Nayak for his comments. And thanks to Kent Murnaghan, as always.

1. I use the term *Third World* conscious of many of its limitations: as will be seen, my argument attempts to complicate the term by underlining the pluralism within and between Third World democracies and by pointing out the artificiality of the First World/Third World distinction in some instances and its necessity in others.

2. Strictly speaking, Habermas's standpoint is deontological, as evidenced by its proceduralism.

3. "An Allegory of Modernity/Postmodernity: Habermas and Derrida," in *The New Constellation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 219 (emphasis in original), 201, 225, where Bernstein, inspired by Adorno and Benjamin, treats the Habermas-Derrida debate as a "constellation," much as I propose to do with the Habermas-Mouffe debate.

4. The works of Pantham and Sundara Rajan, two Indian political philosophers, are notable exceptions; see Thomas Pantham, "Habermas' Practical Discourse and Gandhi's *Satyagraha*," in *Political Discourse: Explorations in Indian and Western Political Thought*, Bhiku Parekh and Thomas Pantham, eds. (New Delhi: Sage, 1987), 292–310; and R. Sundara Rajan, *Innovative Competence and Social Change* (Ganeshkind: Poona University Press, 1986); idem, *Towards a Critique of Cultural Reason* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); and idem, *The Primacy of the Political* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991). But while important, the arguments of these theorists are not directly relevant to the issues raised by the Habermas-Mouffe debate, which is the focus of this article.

5. See Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); and idem, "Beyond the Search for a Paradigm? Post-development and Beyond," *Development* 43, no. 4 (2000): 11–14. His work will be drawn upon later in the article.

6. These qualifications aside, I would also like to underscore that in arguing for the importance and relevance of the Habermas-Mouffe debate to Third World politics, I do not wish to imply that these First World theorists' contributions are more relevant or important than those elaborated by Third World political theorists. The work of Pantham and Parekh (referenced in note 4), for example, is important in helping valorize political theory in/from the Third World and promoting Third World/First World dialogue in political theory. Innumerable other theorists (from other parts of the world, and in many other disciplines, e.g., postcolonial studies) could also be mentioned, but for an excellent engagement with Third World political theory and encouragement of what may be called a cross-cultural hermeneutics, see Fred Dallmayr's *Beyond Orientalism: Essays in Cross-Cultural Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); idem, *Alternative Visions: Paths in the Global Village* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); and idem *Border Crossings: Toward a Comparative Political Theory* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 1999). I see the present article—both in its encounter with the work of two First World theorists and in its critique and qualifications of their work from the perspective of Third World issues—as part of such critical cross-cultural dialogue.

7. Chantal Mouffe, "Decision, Deliberation, and Democratic Ethos," *Philosophy Today* (Spring 1997): 24–30; idem, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" *Social Research* 66, no. 3 (1999): 745–758; and idem, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), esp. chap. 4, 80 ff. Note that

between them these three works contain much overlap and repetition (Mouffe admits as much in the foreword to her book; see *Democratic Paradox*, xi).

8. Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 21–30; idem, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, William Rehg, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996); and idem, *The Inclusion of the Other* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).

9. See Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Thomas Burger, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); and Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992). Note that, for Habermas, state power and economic/money exchange are nondialogical and nondiscursive modes of coordination; hence, his defense of a dialogical and discursive public sphere.

10. See references in note 8.

11. Habermas, "Normative Models," note 8, 24.

12. See Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, C. Lenhardt and S. Weber Nicholsen, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 88–89, 197; and idem, *Legitimation Crisis*, Thomas McCarthy, trans. (London: Heinemann, 1976), 107–109; and Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," in Benhabib, note 8, 70. Note that, for Habermas, the ideal speech situation is anticipated in the very structure of human communication; see *Moral Consciousness*, 86–87. Note as well that of late Habermas appears to prefer to use the terms *norms of discourse* or *procedures of discourse*, rather than *ideal speech situation*.

13. See *Between Facts and Norms*, note 8.

14. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, note 12, 88 ff., 160, 198.

15. Quasi-transcendental because deliberative democracy does not impose an outside agenda on public deliberations: the agenda is specific to, and dependent on, participatory politics. Habermas also has in mind quasi-transcendence of ethical/cultural background, believing that rationalization requires self-reflexivity and transcendence regarding one's own traditions and beliefs; thus, culture is both the backdrop of communicative reason and its object. However, he ends up championing the "moral" over the "ethical," which amounts to prioritizing transcendence/universality over particularity/culture/the personal (see below). That is the point at which he runs into feminist and other criticisms.

16. "Normative Models," note 8, 28 (emphasis in original).

17. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, note 12, 67, 198.

18. Ibid., 104. In more recent writings (e.g., "Normative Models," note 8, 23–25), Habermas appears to soften his stance on the absolute priority of morality over ethics, most likely because he is heeding the strong criticisms of feminists and others of this stance. These criticisms are dealt with below.

19. Ibid., 25.

20. Mouffe, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" note 7, 749; see also Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, note 7, 67–69, 97.

21. Quoted in "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" note 7, 749–50 (emphasis in original); see also Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, note 7, 97–98.

22. "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" note 7, 751. In *The Democratic Paradox*, Mouffe writes that the ideal speech situation is a

"*conceptual* impossibility" (p. 33). On this issue, see the excellent article by Kieran Keohane, written well in advance of Mouffe's recent work and announcing many of the themes she has only now taken up, "Central Problems in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences after Postmodernism: Reconciling Consensus and Hegemonic Theories of Epistemology and Political Ethics," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 19, no. 2 (1993); 145–169.

23. "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" note 7, 751.

24. "Decision, Deliberation, and Democratic Ethos," note 7, 25; and "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" note 7, 745. Mouffe's characterization of Habermas as seeking to eliminate conflict altogether from the deliberative sphere is debatable; as implied earlier. In my view, Habermas wishes to minimize (not eliminate) power inequalities and conflict to the extent possible.

25. *Democratic Paradox*, note 7, 18–19 (emphasis in original).

26. *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), 13.

27. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985), 182–183.

28. "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" note 7, 755; see also *Democratic Paradox*, note 7, 13, 102–103. Note that Mouffe's discussion around friend/enemy, enemy/adversary is based on her reading of Carl Schmitt's work; see, for example, *Democratic Paradox*, chap. 2, 36 ff.

29. "Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?" in *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*, A. Ross, ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 24. See also Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, note 27, 149 ff.

30. See Escobar, *Encountering Development*, note 5.

31. Habermas, "Normative Models," note 8, 26–27.

32. *Democratic Paradox*, note 7, 4.

33. For Habermas's analysis of liberal democratic institutions and crises, see *Legitimation Crisis*, note 12, esp. 61–75.

34. This is a theme taken up, in particular, in Habermas, note 9, but also in some of his recent works; see Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," in Calhoun, note 9, 28.

35. Seyla Benhabib, "Introduction: The Democratic Moment and the Problem of Difference," in Benhabib, note 8, and Benhabib, note 12, 3–18; 67–94. Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender," in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 133–143; and idem, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in Calhoun, note 9, 109–142; and Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990); and idem, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy," in Benhabib, note 8, 120–135.

36. "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" note 7, 757.

37. See David Mosse, "Authority, Gender, and Knowledge: Theoretical Reflections on the Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal," *Development and Change* 25 (1994): 509–510; and L. Mayoux, "Beyond Naivety: Women, Gender Inequality, and Participatory Development," *Development and Change* 26 (1995): 235–258.

38. Mosse, note 37, 515.

39. See Benhabib and Fraser references in note 35.

40. See Iris Marion Young, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy," 123–124; Amarpal K. Dhaliwal, "Can the Subaltern Vote? Radical Democracy, Discourse of Representation and Rights, and Questions of Race," in *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and State*, D. Trend, ed. (London: Routledge, 1996), 46; and Upendra Baxi, "What Is Wrong with Sycophancy? A Caveat on Overrationalized Notions of Political Communication," in Parekh and Pantham, note 4.

41. See Jane L. Parpart, "Rethinking Participation, Empowerment, and Development from a Gender Perspective," in *Transforming Development: Foreign Aid for a Changing World*, J. Freedman, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 222–234; Mayoux, note 37; Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory?" and "Rethinking the Public Sphere," both in note 35; and Seyla Benhabib, "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas," in Calhoun, note 9, 89–95.

42. Dallmayr, *Alternative Visions*, note 6, 211, 269.

43. See, for example, Habermas's recognition of feminist concerns about the public sphere in his "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in Calhoun, note 9, 428, and his somewhat softened stance on the hierarchy between moral/ethical in *Inclusion of the Other*, note 8 (whose very title is indicative of his sensitivity to this issue) and "Normative Models," note 8.

44. Mansbridge, "Using Power/Fighting Power: The Polity," in Benhabib, note 8, 47.

45. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," note 35, 123–124.

46. *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, Thomas McCarthy, trans. (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 305.

47. Mansbridge, note 44, 54.

48. *Critique, Norm, and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 313–315.

49. "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" note 7, 756.

50. There is a burgeoning but rich literature in planning and policy studies on these issues; see, for example, John Forester, ed., *Critical Theory and Public Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985); Patsy Healy, "The Communicative Work of Development Plans," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 20 (1993): 83–104.; M. Tewdwr-Jones and P. Allemendinger, "Deconstructing Communicative Rationality: A Critique of Habermasian Collaborative Planning," *Environment and Planning A* 30, no. 10 (1998): 1975–1989; and John Dryzek, *Discursive Democracy: Politics, Policy, and Political Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

51. Giles Mohan and Kristian Stokke, "Participatory Development and Empowerment: The Dangers of Localism," *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (2000): 249.

52. See G. H. Fagan, "Cultural Politics and (Post) Development Paradigms," in R. Munck and D. O'Hearn, eds., *Critical Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm* (1999), 179–195; R. Kiely, "The Last Refuge of the Noble Savage? A Critical Assessment of Post-development Theory," *European Journal of Development Research* 11, no. 1 (1999): 30–55; and Andy Storey, "Romanticism and Pontius Pilate Politics," *Development* 43, no. 4 (2000): 40–46.

53. See Storey, note 52, 43; and Mohan and Stokke, note 51, 260.

54. See my "The Devil's in the Theory: A Critical Assessment of Robert Chambers' Work on Participatory Development," *Third World Quarterly* 23,

no. 2 (2002): 101–117; S. C. White, "Depoliticising Development: The Uses and Abuses of Participation," *Development in Practice* 6, no. 1 (1996): 6–15; David Mosse, "Authority, Gender, and Knowledge"; and Mayoux, note 37.

55. In this regard, Mouffe writes that "these struggles are not necessarily socialist or even progressive. . . . They can, therefore, be easily assimilated by the discourses of the anti status quo Right as by those of the Left": in "Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Towards a New Concept of Democracy," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 98.

56. Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, note 7, 74; and Mouffe, note 26, 18.

57. Mosse, note 37, 505. I put *tribal* in quotation marks to symbolize my discomfort in using (and of the construction of) the term (as I have done with other words, such as *ethnic* and *racial*). In fact, in India, "tribal" or indigenous people prefer to use the term *adivasi*.

58. See White, note 54.

59. "Normative Models," note 8, 27; and *Between Facts and Norms*, note 8, 361.

60. Mohan and Stokke, note 51, 249.

61. "Democratic Moment," note 35, 8.

62. Mouffe, "Radical Democracy" note 29, 37.

63. *Democratic Paradox*, Mouffe, note 7, 20. Mouffe makes almost identical statements, with similar subjunctive clauses, in "Decision, Deliberation, and Democratic Ethos" (Mouffe, note 7), 25; "Radical Democracy" (Mouffe, note 29) 24; and "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?" (Mouffe, note 7), 754.

64. Benhabib, note 12, 71.

65. Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism*, note 6, 165. For a brief explanation of what Habermas means by *rationalization*, see note 15 above.

66. Richard Bernstein, "Fred Dallmayr's Critique of Habermas," *Political Theory* 16, no. 4 (1988): 584–585.

67. "Habermas's Communicative Ethics and the Development of Moral Consciousness," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 10 (fall 1984): 32.

68. Craig Calhoun argues that Habermas's later work seeks a "less historical, more transcendental basis for democracy"; see Calhoun, note 34, 31–32, 40.

69. This is particularly true of *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, Legitimation Crisis*, and *The Theory of Communicative Action*.

70. Mouffe's colleague Ernesto Laclau has devoted much of his writing to Third World (esp. Latin American) politics. But this does not excuse Mouffe for not doing the same or at least touching on Third World issues in her work, if only to advance her critique of Western liberalism.

71. *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 278.

72. Ibid.; Habermas's interview can be found in *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas*, Peter Dews, ed. (London: Verso, 1992, rev. ed.), 183.

73. Let me be clear: I am not arguing that Habermas and Mouffe should cover Third World politics in their democratic theories (that would be presumptuous of me). I argue, instead, that given their critique of Western liberal democracy, their failure to look into Western liberalism's complicity with colonialism/imperialism is conspicuous by its absence and, moreover, that a discussion of this complicity would enhance their critique.

74. See his "Reflections on 'Development': Grassroots Approaches and Alternative Politics in the Third World," *Futures* 24 (1992): esp. 431–432; and idem, *Encountering Development*, note 5.

75. See Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "My Paradigm or Yours? Alternative Development, Post-development, and Reflexive Development," *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 343–373; and Storey, note 52, 42.

76. Mohan and Stokke, note 51, 260. Mohan and Stokke are speaking about Laclau and Mouffe here, although they also see Escobar as wanting in this respect.

77. *Justification and Application* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 68–69.

78. Bernstein, note 66, 587.

79. Habermas writes: "After all, the majority of conflicts have their sources in the collision of group interests and concern distributive problems that can be resolved only by means of compromise": in "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere," in Calhoun, note 9, 448.

80. Habermas's recent work suggests, however, that he may be moving in this direction; see *The Postnational Constellation*, Max Pensky, trans. and ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), esp. chapter 4, 58 ff.

81. On this argument, see David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995); and Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon, eds., *Democracy's Edges* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

82. Of course, such a hermeneutical approach warrants my declaring my own prejudices (prejudices that underlie this article)—those of a Third World academic living and working in the West and partial to a critical, cross-cultural dialogue (with all its pitfalls) and the project of extending democracy.