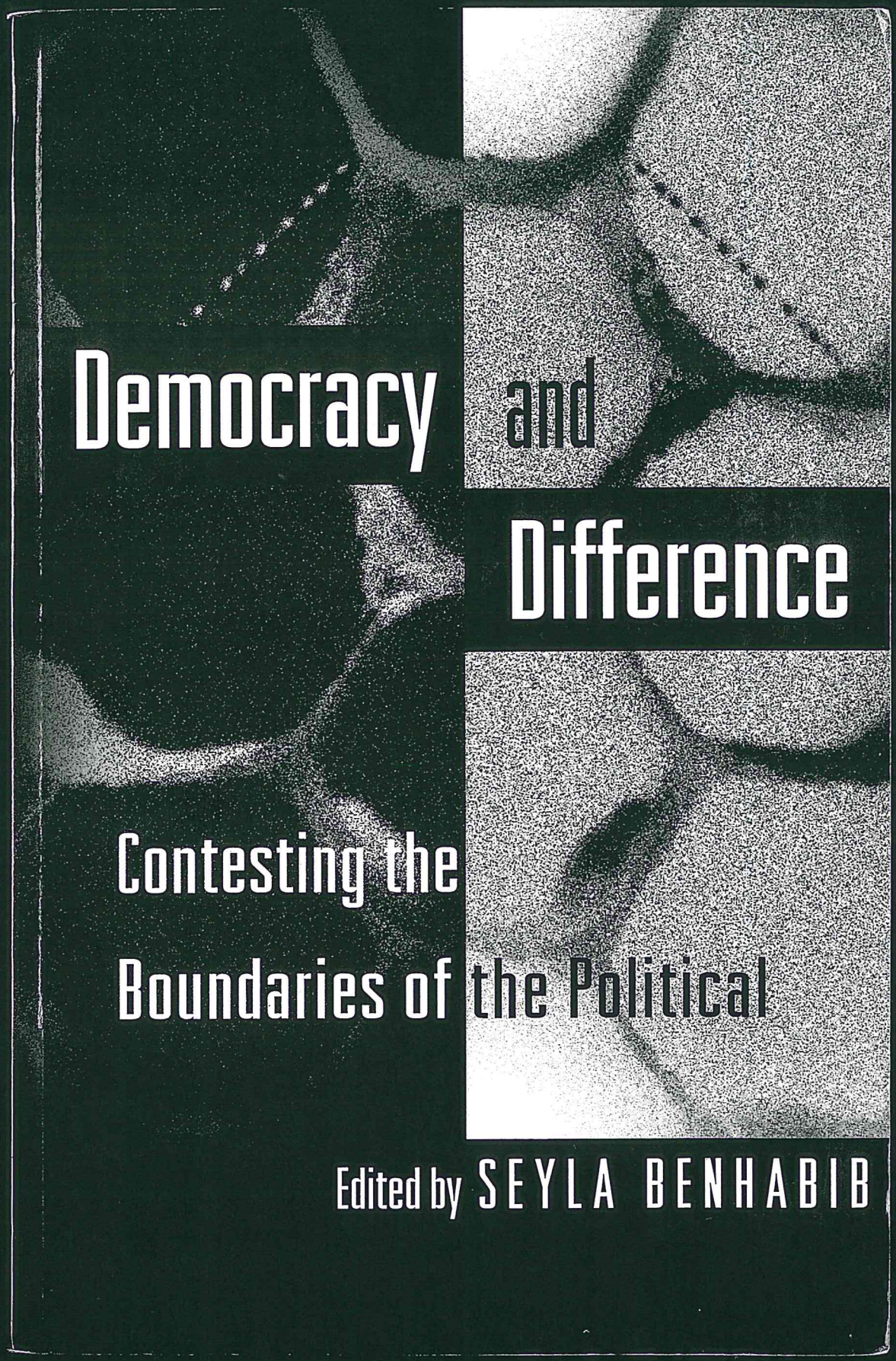

Democracy and Difference

Contesting the Boundaries of the Political

Edited by SEYLA BENHABIB

Six

Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy

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A NUMBER of political and legal theorists in recent years have promoted a concept of deliberative democracy as an alternative to an interest-based theory of democracy. In this essay I endorse such a discussion-based ideal of democracy. I find two problems, however, with the way this ideal is usually articulated. First, by restricting their concept of democratic discussion narrowly to critical argument, most theorists of deliberative democracy assume a culturally biased conception of discussion that tends to silence or devalue some people or groups. Deliberative theorists, moreover, tend inappropriately to assume that processes of discussion that aim to reach understanding must either begin with shared understandings or take a common good as their goal.

After exploring these shortcomings of the ideal of deliberative democracy as usually formulated, I propose some revisions to this approach to democratic theory, which I call communicative democracy.[1] First, I propose that we understand differences of culture, social perspective, or particularist commitment as resources to draw on for reaching understanding in democratic discussion rather than as divisions that must be overcome. Second, I propose an expanded conception of democratic communication. Greeting, rhetoric, and storytelling are forms of communication that in addition to argument contribute to political discussion.

The Model of Deliberative Democracy

Theorists of deliberative democracy usually contrast their view with what I shall call the interest-based model of democracy.[2] Interest-based conceptions of democracy consider democracy primarily as a process of expressing one's preferences and demands, and registering them in a vote. The goal of democratic decision-making is to decide what leaders, rules, and policies will best serve the greatest number of people, where each person defines his or her own interests. In the process of democratic decision-making, individuals and interest groups determine and vote for policies that will best serve their own perceived interests, including in their calculations the knowledge that the others in the polity do the same. Democratic decisions are the outcome of successful completion of ideas and coalitions for self-interested votes.

Deliberative critics of the interest-based model of democracy object to what they perceive as its irrationality and its privatized understanding of the political process. In this model, citizens never need to leave their own private and parochial pursuits and recognize their fellows in a public setting to address one another about their collective, as distinct from individual, needs and goals. Each citizen may reason about the best means for achieving his or her own privately defined ends, but the aggregate outcome has no necessary rationality and itself has not been arrived at by a process of reasoning.[3] People need not leave their own subjective point of view to take a more objective or general view of political issues. Thus the interest-based model of democracy also presumes that people cannot make claims on others about justice or the public good and defend those claims with reasons.[4]

By contrast, the model of deliberative democracy conceives of democracy as a process that creates a public, citizens coming together to talk about collective problems, goals, ideals, and actions. Democratic processes are oriented around discussing this common good rather than competing for the promotion of the private good of each. Instead of reasoning from the point of view of the private utility maximizer, through public deliberation citizens transform their preferences according to public-minded ends, and reason together about the nature of those ends and the best means to realize them. In free and open dialogue others test and challenge these assertions and reasons. Participants are careful to sort out good reasons from bad reasons, valid arguments from invalid. The interlocutors properly discount bad reasons and speeches that are not well argued, and they ignore or discount rhetorical flourishes and emotional outbursts. Putting forward and criticizing claims and arguments, participants in deliberation do not rest until the "force of the better argument" compels them all to accept a conclusion.

I agree with these critics of an interest-based model of democracy that it is better to have a conception of democracy that understands politics as the meeting of people to decide public ends and policies in a rational way. Though the interest-based model of democracy corresponds most to current practice and attitudes in contemporary Western democracies, norms of public reason sometimes do appear in the actual processes of liberal democracies as we know them. Such deliberative democracy appears most often in our current experience in the decision-making structures of voluntary associations outside the state. But processes of state policy formation in legislatures or public hearings sometimes exhibit features of the deliberative model. To the degree that contemporary democracies discourage deliberation and encourage a privatized consumer orientation toward politics on the part of citizens, they ought to be reformed to create more opportunities for deliberation. In what

follows, however, I raise two criticisms of the model of deliberative democracy as usually articulated. Its tendency to restrict democratic discussion to argument carries implicit cultural biases that can lead to exclusions in practice. Its assumption that unity is either a starting point or goal of democratic discussion, moreover, may also have exclusionary consequences.

Exclusionary Implications of the Deliberative Model

A primary virtue of a deliberative model of democracy, I have argued thus far, is that it promotes a conception of reason over power in politics. Policies ought to be adopted not because the most powerful interests win but because the citizens or their representatives together determine their rightness after hearing and criticizing reasons. While there are some elitist tendencies in traditional republicanism, most contemporary deliberative theorists believe that a deliberative democracy is potentially more inclusive and egalitarian than an interest-based democracy.[5] Whereas an interest-based democracy does not preclude money and numbers from influencing decisions, for example, deliberative theorists usually assert that democracy requires an equal voice for all citizens to press their claims, regardless of social position or power.

Joshua Cohen gives a clear picture of the conditions of an ideal of deliberative democracy.[6] His formulation is close to Habermas's ideal of discourse that aims to reach understanding, which John Dryzek relies on as a basis for his conception of discursive democracy.[7] In the ideal of deliberative democracy, participants come to a political problem with an open mind about its solution; they are not bound by the authority of prior norms or requirements. The process of political discussion consists in reasoned argument. Participants put forward proposals and criticize them, and each assents to a conclusion only because of the "force of the better argument." For such assent to be rational, participants must be free and equal. Each must have the equal opportunity to make proposals and criticize, and their speaking situation must be free from domination. No one can be in a position to threaten or coerce others to accept or reject certain proposals. The goal of deliberation is to arrive at consensus; even when this is not possible and participants resort to voting, their result is a collective judgment rather than the aggregate of private preferences.

Deliberative theorists tend to assume that bracketing political and economic power is sufficient to make speakers equal. This assumption fails to notice that the social power that can prevent people from being equal speakers derives not only from economic dependence or political domination but also from an internalized sense of the right one has to speak or not to speak, and from the devaluation of some people's style of speech and the elevation of others. The deliberative ideal tends to assume that when we eliminate the influence of economic and political power, people's ways of speaking and

understanding will be the same; but this will be true only if we also eliminate their cultural differences and different social positions. The model of deliberative democracy, that is, tends to assume that deliberation is both culturally neutral and universal. A theory of communicative democracy that attends to social difference, to the way that power sometimes enters speech itself, recognizes the cultural specificity of deliberative practices, and proposes a more inclusive model of communication.

The deliberative model of communication derives from specific institutional contexts of the modern West—scientific debate, modern parliaments, and courts (each with progenitors in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy and politics, and in the medieval academy). These were some of the aspiring institutions of the bourgeois revolution that succeeded in becoming ruling institutions. Their institutional forms, rules, and rhetorical and cultural styles have defined the meaning of reason itself in the modern world. As ruling institutions, however, they have been elitist and exclusive, and these exclusions mark their very conceptions of reason and deliberation, both in the institutions and in the rhetorical styles they represent. Since their Enlightenment beginnings they have been male-dominated institutions, and in class- and race-differentiated societies they have been white- and upper class–dominated. Despite the claim of deliberative forms of orderly meetings to express pure universal reason, the norms of deliberation are culturally specific and often operate as forms of power that silence or devalue the speech of some people.

Parliamentary debates or arguments in court are not simply free and open public forums in which all people actually have the right to express claims and give reasons according to their own understanding. Instead of defining discussion as the open reciprocal recognition of the point of view of everyone, these institutions style deliberation as agonistic. Deliberation is competition. Parties to dispute aim to win the argument, not to achieve mutual understanding. Consenting because of the "force of the better argument" means being unable to think of further counterargument, that is, to concede defeat.[8] The agonistic norms of deliberation reveal ways that power reenters this arena, even though deliberative theorists may claim to have bracketed it.

Restricting practices of democratic discussion to moves in a contest where some win and others lose privileges those who like contests and know the rules of the game. Speech that is assertive and confrontational is here more valued than speech that is tentative, exploratory, or conciliatory. In most actual situations of discussion, this privileges male speaking styles over female. A growing literature claims to show that girls and women tend to speak less than boys and men in speaking situations that value assertiveness and argument competition. When women do speak in such situations, moreover, they tend to give information and ask questions rather than state opinions or initiate controversy.[9]

In many formal situations the better-educated white middle-class people, moreover, often act as though they have a right to speak and that their words carry authority, whereas those of other groups often feel intimidated by the argument requirements and the formality and rules of parliamentary procedure, so they do not speak, or speak only a way that those in charge find "disruptive." Norms of assertiveness, combativeness, and speaking by the contest rules are powerful silencers or evaluators of speech in many actual speaking situations where culturally differentiated and socially unequal groups live together. The dominant groups, moreover, often fail entirely to notice this devaluation and silencing, while the less privileged often feel put down or frustrated, either losing confidence in themselves or becoming angry.

The norms of deliberation also privilege speech that is formal and general. Speech that proceeds from premise to conclusion in an orderly fashion that clearly lays out its inference structure is better than other speech. It is also better to assert one's position in terms of generalities and principles that apply to particular instances. These norms of "articulateness," however, must be learned; they are culturally specific, and in actual speaking situations in our society exhibiting such speaking styles is a sign of social privilege. Deliberation thus does not open itself equally to all ways of making claims and giving reasons. In formal situations of discussion and debate, such as classrooms, courtrooms, and city council chambers, many people feel they must apologize for their halting and circuitous speech.

The norms of deliberation, finally, privilege speech that is dispassionate and disembodied. They tend to presuppose an opposition between mind and body, reason and emotion. They tend falsely to identify objectivity with calm and absence of emotional expression. Thus expressions of anger, hurt, and passionate concern discount the claims and reasons they accompany. Similarly, the entrance of the body into speech—in wide gestures, movements of nervousness or body expressions of emotion—are signs of weakness that cancel out one's assertions or reveal one's lack of objectivity and control. Deliberative norms tend to privilege "literal" language over figurative language such as hyperbole, metaphor, and so on.

Once again, in our society these differences of speech privilege correlate with other differences of social privilege. The speech culture of white middle-class men tends to be more controlled, without significant gesture and expression of emotion. The speech culture of women and racial minorities, on the other, tends to be more excited and embodied, more valuing the expression of emotion, the use of figurative language, modulation in tone of voice, and wide gesture.[10]

I conclude from these considerations that this discussion-based theory of democracy must have a broader idea of the forms and styles of speaking that political discussion involves than deliberative theorists usually imagine. I prefer to call such a broadened theory communicative, rather than deliberative, democracy, to indicate an equal privileging of any forms of communicative interaction where people aim to reach understanding. While argument is a necessary element in such effort to discuss with and persuade one another about political issues, argument is not the only mode of political communication, and argument can be expressed in a plurality of ways, interspersed with or alongside other communicative forms.

Deliberative Model Assumes Unity

Unlike the interest-based conception of democracy, communicative democracy emphasizes that people's ideas about political questions often change when they interact with other people's ideas and experiences. If in a public discussion about collective action or public policy people simply say what they want, without any claims of justice or rightness, they will not be taken seriously. Instead, they must appeal to others by presenting proposals they claim are just or good and that others ought to accept. In this process people's own initial preferences are transformed from subjective desires to objective claims and the content of these preferences must also often change to make them publicly speakable, as claims of entitlement or what is right. People's ideas about the solution to collective problems are also sometimes transformed by listening to and learning about the point of view of others.

Deliberative theorists commonly write about this process of moving from subjective self-regarding preferences to more objective or general opinions about the solution to collective problems as a process of discovering or constructing unity among them. I see two approaches that deliberative theorists take in discussing such unity. Some take unity to be a prior condition of deliberation. Michael Walzer, for example, argues that effective social criticism locates and appeals to a community's prior "shared understandings."[11] Sometimes Jürgen Habermas writes as though reaching understanding through discourse about norms depends on restoring a disrupted consensus.[12]

There are at least two problems with this way of constructing the process of discussion. First, in contemporary pluralist societies we cannot assume that there are sufficient shared understandings to appeal to in many situations of conflict and solving collective problems. Second, the assumption of prior unity obviates the need for the self-transcendence, which I cited earlier as an important component of a communicative model of democracy. If discussion succeeds primarily when it appeals to what the discussants all share, then none need revise their opinions or viewpoints in order to take account of perspectives and experiences beyond them. Even if they need the others to see what they all share, each finds in the other only a mirror for him- or herself.

Recognizing such problems, some theorists of discussion-based democracy conceptualize unity not as a starting point but as a goal of political dialogue.

On this view, participants transcend their subjective, self-regarding perspective on political issues by putting aside their particular interests and seeking the good of the whole. Participants in a communicative democratic interchange often begin with differences of culture, perspective, interest, but the goal of discussion is to locate or create common interests that all can share. To arrive at the common good it may be necessary to work through differences, but difference itself is something to be transcended, because it is partial and divisive.[13]

The problem with this conception of the unity of democratic discussion is that it may harbor another mechanism of exclusion. Assuming a discussion situation in which participants are differentiated by group-based culture and social position, and where some groups have greater symbolic or material privilege than others, appeals to a "common good" are likely to perpetuate such privilege. As I argued in the previous section, even communication situations that bracket the direct influence of economic or political inequality nevertheless can privilege certain cultural styles and values. When discussion participants aim at unity, the appeal to a common good in which they are all supposed to leave behind their particular experience and interests, the perspectives of the privileged are likely to dominate the definition of that common good. The less privileged are asked to put aside the expression of their experience, which may require a different idiom, or their claims of entitlement or interest must be put aside for the sake of a common good whose definition is biased against them.[14]

Considering Difference a Resource

There is no reason or structure for differently situated groups to engage in democratic discussion if they do not live together in a polity. In this sense some unity is of course a condition of democratic communication. But the unity of a single polity is a much weaker unity, I suggest, than deliberative theorists usually assume. The unity that motivates politics is the facticity of people being thrown together, finding themselves in geographical proximity and economic interdependence such that activities and pursuits of some affect the ability of others to conduct their activities. A polity consists of people who live together, who are stuck with one another.

If a polity is to be a communicative democracy, even more unity is necessary. Its members must have a commitment to equal respect for one another, in the simple formal sense of willingness to say that all have a right to express their opinions and points of view, and all ought to listen. The members of the polity, furthermore, must agree on procedural rules of fair discussion and decision-making. These three conditions—significant interdependence, formally equal respect, and agreed-on procedures—are all the unity necessary

for communicative democracy. They are much thinner conditions than those of shared understandings or the goals of finding common goods. Within the context of this minimal unity that characterizes communicative democracy, a richer understanding of processes of democratic discussion results if we assume that differences of social position and identity perspective function as a resource for public reason rather than as divisions that public reason transcends.

I have already argued that one of the problems with assuming unity as a starting point or goal of deliberative democracy is that such a conception cannot account well for the transformation the communicative process should often produce in the opinions of the participants. If we are all really looking for what we have in common—whether as a prior condition or as a result—then we are not transforming our point of view. We only come to see ourselves mirrored in others. If we assume, on the other hand, that communicative interaction means encountering differences of meaning, social position, or need that I do not share and identify with, then we can better describe how that interaction transforms my preferences. Different social positions encounter one another with the awareness of their difference. This does not mean that we believe we have no similarities; difference is not total otherness. But it means that each position is aware that it does not comprehend the perspective of the others differently located, in the sense that it cannot be assimilated into one's own. There is thus something to be learned from the other perspectives as they communicate their meanings and perspectives, precisely because the perspectives are beyond one another and not reducible to a common good. This process of mutual expression of experience and points of view that transcend the initial understanding of each accounts for a transformation in their opinions.

Communication among perspectives that transcend one another preserves the plurality that Hannah Arendt understood as a condition of publicity. The plural standpoints in the public enable each participant to understand more of what the society means or what the possible consequences of a policy will be by each situating his or her own experience and interest in a wider context of understanding something in other social locations. By "understand" I mean something somewhat different from what some deliberative theorists mean. Frequently in communicative contexts when people say they have come to an understanding or they understand one another, they think that this implies a mutual identification. People have reached understanding, in this conception, when they have transcended what differentiates and divides them and now have the same meaning or beliefs or principles.

If communicative democracy is better conceived as speaking across differences of culture, social position, and need, which are preserved in the process, however, then understanding one another and reaching understanding does not imply this identification. Understanding another social location can here

mean that there has been successful expression of experience and perspective, so that other social positions learn, and part of what they understand is that there remains more behind that experience and perspective that transcends their own subjectivity.[15]

Preserving and listening across such differences of position and perspective causes the transformation in preference that deliberative theorists recommend. This transformation occurs in three ways. 1) Confrontation with different perspective, interests, and cultural meanings teaches me the partiality of my own, reveals to me my own experience as perspectival. 2) Knowledge that I am in a situation of collective problem solving with others who have different perspectives on the problems and different cultures and values from my own, and that they have the right to challenge my claims and arguments, forces me to transform my expressions of self-interest and desire into appeals to justice. Proposals for collective policies need not be expressed as general interest, an interest all can share; they may be claims about an obligation on the part of the public to recognize and provide for some unique needs of uniquely situated persons. Nevertheless the plural public perspectives require such expressed claims to appeal across difference, to presume a lack of understanding to be bridged, thus transforming the experience itself. 3) Expressing, questioning, and challenging differently situated knowledge, finally, adds to the social knowledge of all the participants. While not abandoning their own perspective, through listening across difference each position can come to understand something about the ways proposals and claims affect others differently situated. By internalizing this mediated understanding of plural positions to some extent, participants gain a wider picture of the social processes in which their own partial experience is embedded. This greater social objectivity increases their wisdom for arriving at just solutions to collective problems.

The Breadth of Communicative Democracy

In Plato's *Gorgias*, Socrates discusses the virtues and vices of rhetoric with students of the famous rhetorician, and with Gorgias himself. Socrates pushes his interlocutors to seek a distinction between the art of argument that reveals truth, on the one hand, and mere knack of persuasion that only produces appearances, on the other. Rhetoric is a mere knack of knowing how to please and flatter an audience, the dialogue suggests, in contrast to the critical thinking of philosophy, which sometimes displeases and discomforts the audience in order to lead them to shed comfortable falsehoods. As the dialogue proceeds it becomes clear, however, that Socrates and his interlocutors cannot sustain such a distinction between truth and rhetoric; argument also persuades, and the best one can say is that there is a difference between good rhetoric and bad rhetoric. Through the events of the dialogue Plato also illustrates the untenability of the distinction. Socrates engages in flattery in order to motivate his interlocutors to continue the discussion. He uses countless rhetorical tricks, from humor to irony to ridicule to self-effacement. Here as in nearly every other of Plato's dialogues, Socrates recites a myth, a poetic story that passes over argument to pull on intuition.

Following recent feminist accounts of dialogical reason,[16] as well as male African-American and Latino articulations of cultural biases in dominant conceptions of deliberation,[17] I propose three elements that a broader conception of communicative democracy requires in addition to critical argument: greeting, rhetoric, and storytelling. Because they recognize the embodiment and particularity of interlocutors, these three modes of communication help establish and maintain the plurality that I have argued, following Arendt, is necessary to the meaning and existence of publicity. Where such a public contains group-based cultural, social perspectival, and valuative differences, moreover, these communicative forms supplement argument by providing ways of speaking across difference in the absence of significant shared understandings.

Greeting. With the term "greeting" I wish to present the virtuous form of the communication mode that the *Gorgias* presents as the vice of flattery. A logical and motivational condition for dialogue that aims to reach understanding is that the parties in the dialogue recognize one another in their particularity. I call this moment of communication "greeting" to evoke the everyday pragmatic mode in which we experience such acknowledgment. Here is speech necessary to communication that does not *say* anything—it makes no assertion and has no specific content:[18] "Good morning," "How are you," "Welcome," "See you later," "Take care." In the category of greeting I also include such expressions of leave taking, as well as the forms of speech that often lubricate ongoing discussion with mild forms of flattery, stroking of egos, and deference.

Especially when parties to dialogue differ in many ways, either in their culture and values or in the interests and aims they bring to discussion, their effort to resolve conflict or come to agreement on a course of action cannot begin without preliminaries in which the parties establish trust or respect. These preliminaries often consist in various forms of flattery; introductory speeches that name the others with honorific titles, acknowledge the greatness of their achievements and ideals, and so on.[19]

Communicative interaction in which participants aim at reaching understanding is often peppered with gestures of politeness and deference, the absence of which is felt as coldness, indifference, insult. Discussion is also wrapped in nonlinguistic gestures that bring people together warmly, seeing conditions for amicability: smiles, handshakes, hugs, the giving and taking of food and drink.[20] In this respect bodies, and care for bodies, must enter an ideal of communicative democracy. Theorists of deliberative democracy,

however, seem to have no place for care-taking, deferential, polite acknowledgment of the Otherness of others. Since much democratic discussion will be fraught with disagreement, anger, conflict, counterargument, and criticism, intermittent gestures of flattery, greeting, deference, and conciliatory caring keep commitment to the discussion at times of anger and disagreement.

Rhetoric. Deliberative theorists typically aim to fulfill the Platonic attempt to distinguish rational speech from mere rhetoric, and in so doing they usually denigrate emotion and figurative language. Rational speech, on this view, the speech to which deliberative democracy should be confined, consists in making assertions and giving sober reasons for them, with the logical connections among them clearly spelled out. Thus Thomas Spragens, for example, invokes Hitler's disdain for the rationality of the masses as a warning against rhetorical speech that aims to move the masses with hot passion. A rational democracy, he claims, will engage the mind rather than ignite the passions.[21] As James Bohman points out, Habermas also tries to distinguish rational speech from rhetoric by distinguishing between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts.[22] But the opposition between rational discourse and rhetoric, in my view, denigrates both the situatedness of communication and its necessary link to desire.

In a discussion situation in which different people with different aims, values, and interests seek to solve collective problems justly, it is not enough to make assertions and give reasons. One must also be heard. As Benjamin Barber points out, democratic theorists value speaking, but they less often discuss listening.[23] Rhetoric names the forms and styles of speaking that reflexively attend to the audience in speech. While there are many aspects to this styling of speech for its listeners, I will focus on the two I mentioned earlier: situatedness and the link to desire.

Rhetoric announces the situatedness of communication. With rhetorical figures a speech constructs the speaker's position in relation to those of the audience. Through rhetoric the speaker appeals to the particular attributes or experience of the audience, and his or her own particular location in relation to them. Rhetoric also constructs the occasion of the speech—today we commemorate, or we have just had an urgent phone call, or there is an ongoing policy discussion we are having. Rhetoric constructs speaker, audience, and occasion by invoking or creating specific meanings, connotations, and symbols, and it serves this connecting function whether the speaker and audience share meanings or not.

Socrates faults the rhetorician for aiming to please the audience rather than telling them hard truths. But Plato shows in Socrates' person that there is an important erotic dimension in communication that aims to reach understanding, that persuasion is partly seduction. One function of rhetoric is to get and keep attention. The most elegant and truthful arguments may fail to evoke assent if they are boring. Humor, wordplay, images, and figures of

speech embody and color the arguments, making the discussion pull on thought through desire.

Storytelling. In a communicative democracy participants in discussion aim at reaching understandings about solutions to their collective problems. Although there is hardly a speaking situation in which participants have no shared meanings, disagreements, divergent understandings, and varying perspectives are also usually present. In situations of conflict that discussion aims to address, groups often begin with misunderstandings or a sense of complete lack of understanding of who their interlocutors are, and a sense that their own needs, desires, and motives are not understood. This is especially so where class or culture separates the parties. Doing justice under such circumstances of differences requires recognizing the particularity of individuals and groups as much as seeking general interests. Narrative fosters understanding across such difference without making those who are different symmetrical, in at least three ways.

First, narrative reveals the particular experiences of those in social locations, experiences that cannot be shared by those situated differently but that they must understand in order to do justice to the others. Imagine that wheelchair-bound people at a university make claims upon university resources to remove what they see as impediments to their full participation, and to give them positive aid in ways they claim will equalize their ability to compete with able-bodied students for academic status. A primary way they make their case will be through telling stories of their physical, temporal, social, and emotional obstacles. It would be a mistake to say that once they hear these stories the others understand the situation of the wheelchair-bound to the extent that they can adopt their point of view. On the contrary, the storytelling provides enough understanding of the situation of the wheelchair-bound by those who can walk for them to understand that they cannot share the experience.

Narrative exhibits subjective experience to other subjects. The narrative can evoke sympathy while maintaining distance because the narrative also carries an inexhaustible latent shadow, the transcendence of the Other, that there is always more to be told.

Second, narrative reveals a source of values, culture, and meaning. When an argument proceeds from premise to conclusion, it is only as persuasive as the acceptance of its premises among deliberators. Few institutions bring people together to face collective problems, moreover, where the people affected, however divided and diverse, can share no premises. Pluralist polities, however, often face serious divergences in value premises, cultural practices and meanings, and these disparities bring conflict, insensitivity, insult, and misunderstanding. Under these circumstances, narrative can serve to explain to outsiders what practices, places, or symbols mean to the people who hold them. Values, unlike norms, often cannot be justified through argument. But neither are they arbitrary. Their basis often emerges from the situated history of a

people. Through narrative the outsiders may come to understand why the insiders value what they value and why they have the priorities they have.

How do the Lakota convey to others in South Dakota why the Black Hills mean so much to them, and why they believe they have special moral warrant to demand a stop to forestry in the Black Hills? Through stories—myths in which the Black Hills figure as primary characters, stories of Lakota individuals and groups in relation to those mountains. Values appear as a result of a history, by which a group relate "where they are coming from."

Finally, narrative not only exhibits experience and values from the point of view of the subjects that have and hold them. It also reveals a total social knowledge from the point of view of that social position. Each social perspective has an account not only of its own life and history but of every other position that affects its experience. Thus listeners can learn about how their own position, actions, and values appear to others from the stories they tell. Narrative thus exhibits the situated knowledge available of the collective from each perspective, and the combination of narratives from different perspectives produces the collective social wisdom not available from any one position.

There are two general conclusions to draw from this account of the role of narrative communication in which people aim to solve collective problems through discussion. First, narrative can often play an important role in argument in democratic discussion. Where arguments about policy or action depend on appeals to need or entitlement, narrative provides an important way to demonstrate need or entitlement. Narrative also contributes to political argument by the social knowledge it offers of how social segments view one another's actions and what are the likely effects of policies and actions on people in different social locations.[24]

As Lynn Sanders argues, storytelling complements arguments in a communicative democracy because it tends to be more egalitarian than typical deliberative processes.[25] I discussed earlier how deliberation can privilege the dispassionate, the educated, or those who feel they have a right to assert. Because everyone has stories to tell, with different styles and meanings, and because each can tell her story with equal authority, the stories have equal value in the communicative situation.[26]

I thus propose in this essay an ideal of communicative rather than deliberative democracy. The ideal of communicative democracy includes more than deliberative democracy, because it recognizes that when political dialogue aims at solving collective problems, it justly requires a plurality of perspectives, speaking styles, and ways of expressing the particularity of social situation as well as the general applicability of principles. A theory of democratic discussion useful to the contemporary world must explain the possibility of communication across wide differences of culture and social position.

Such a theory of democracy needs a broad and plural conception of communication that includes both the expression and the extension of shared understandings, where they exist, and the offering and acknowledgment of unshared meanings.

Notes

1. I have begun to develop this idea of communicative democracy in another essay, "Justice and Communicative Democracy," in Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *Radical Philosophy: Tradition, Counter-Tradition, Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 23–42.

2. Among the writers whom I include as theorists of deliberative democracy are Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," in Alan Hamlin and Philip Pettit, *The Good Polity* (London: Blackwell, 1989), 17–34; Thomas Spragens, *Reason and Democracy* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990); Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), though Barber is not as susceptible to one of the critiques I offer as the other; Cass R. Sunstein, "Beyond the Republican Revival," *Yale Law Journal* 97 (1988): 1539–90; Frank Michelman, "Traces of Self-Government," *Harvard Law Review* 100 (1986): 4–77; Jane Mansbridge, "A Deliberative Theory of Interest Representation," in Mark P. Patracca, ed., *The Politics of Interests: Interest Groups Transformed* (Boulder, Colo., Westview Press, 1992); John Dryzek, *Discursive Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); James Bohman, "Democracy and Cultural Pluralism," *Political Theory* 23, no. 2 (1995): 253–79; and James Fishkin, *Deliberative Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). I also assume Habermas's theory of communicative action as a basis for a theory of deliberative democracy, and some of my criticism is directed at his theory. Later I will refer to some of Michael Walzer's writing as falling within this general approach to democratic theory.

3. Spragens and Bohman both point to the potential irrationality of an interest-based conception of democracy. See also Jack Knight and James Johnson, "Aggregation and Deliberation: On the Possibility of Democratic Legitimacy," *Political Theory* 22, no. 2 (May 1994): 277–98.

4. See John Burke for a particularly bold assertion of the impossibility of moral claims in public life. *Bureaucratic Responsibility* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

5. James Fishkin is something of an exception here. He argues that there is a tradeoff between political equality and participation. Giving every citizen an equal influence over outcomes, he suggests, precludes deliberation, because in a large-scale democracy this means one person/one vote in aggregated elections and referenda. See *Deliberative Democracy*.

6. Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," 22–23.

7. Habermas, *A Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1: *Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981); Dryzek, *Discursive Democracy*, chaps. 1 and 2.

8. A passage from Habermas's exposition of the function of moral argument shows this unquestioned acceptance of the model of dialogue as competition: "What happens

in argumentation is that the success orientation of competitors is assimilated into a form of communication in which action oriented toward reaching understanding is continued by other means. In argumentation, proponents and opponents engage in *competition with arguments* in order to convince one another, that is, in order to reach a consensus. This dialectical role structure makes forms of disputation available for a comparative search for truth. Argumentation can exploit the conflict between success-oriented competitors for the purpose of achieving consensus so long as the arguments are not reduced to mere means of influencing one another." *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 160.

9. See Lynn Sanders, "Against Deliberation," a paper presented at a meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 1992; she cites studies that show that in juries men talk considerably more than women and are leaders more often. Jane Mansbridge cites studies that show that female state legislators speak less than their male counterparts and that in public meetings women tend more to give information and ask questions, while men state opinions and engage in confrontation. Mansbridge, "Feminism and Democratic Community," in John W. Chapman and Ian Shapiro, eds., *Democratic Community*, Nomos no. 35 (New York: New York University Press, 1991).

10. Anthony Cortese argues that the model of moral reasoning presupposed by Kohlberg and Habermas is ethnocentric and culturally biased, and tends to locate Chicano speaking and reasoning styles lower in its scale; see *Ethnic Ethics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990). Charles Henry discusses the tendency of African-Americans more than whites to couple emotion and anger with argument, influencing African-American styles of public debate; see *Culture and African American Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

11. Michael Walzer, *Interpretation and Social Criticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).

12. Habermas, *Moral Consciousness*, 67.

13. For one statement of this kind of position, see Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 197–212.

14. Compare Lynn Sanders, "Against Deliberation"; I have developed an argument similar to this at greater length in chap. 4 of *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

15. I have developed more of such a conception of understanding across difference in another article, "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder and Enlarged Thought," forthcoming in *Constellations*.

16. Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Practical Dialogue," an unpublished typescript; and Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1990), especially chap. 8.

17. Cortese, *Ethnic Ethics*; and Henry, *Culture and African American Politics*.

18. I have arrived at this moment of communication by way of a reading of Emmanuel Levinas's distinction between the Saying and the Said in *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1981).

19. Upendia Baxi criticizes those who might judge what he calls sycophancy in politics as a symptom of underdevelopment, and calls such a reaction ethnocentric. Sycophancy, or the mutual exchange of flattery and praise, he argues, is an important element in maintaining relationships. To the degree that Western public culture reduces such behavior, he suggests, it impoverishes communication. "What Is Wrong with Sycophancy? A Caveat on Overrationalized Notions of Political Communication," in Bhikhu Parekh and Thomas Pantham, *Political Discourse: Explorations in Indian and Western Thought* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987).

20. In "Feminist Practical Dialogue," Alison Jaggar remarks on the importance of such bodily care-taking for promoting the ends of democratic communication.

21. Spragens, *Reason and Democracy* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), 128.

22. James Bohman, "Emancipation and Rhetoric: The Perlocutions and Illocutions of the Social Critic," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 21, no. 3 (1988).

23. Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 175.

24. Compare Kathryn Abrams, "Hearing the Call of Stories," *California Law Review* 79, no. 4 (July 1991): 971–1052. Reviewing the use of narrative in feminist legal theory, Abrams argues that narrative serves important argumentative functions.

25. Sanders, "Against Deliberation."

26. Jane Braten, "From Communicative Rationality to Communicative Thinking: A Basis for Feminist Theory and Practice," in Johanna Meehan, ed., *Feminists Read Habermas* (New York: Routledge, 1995).