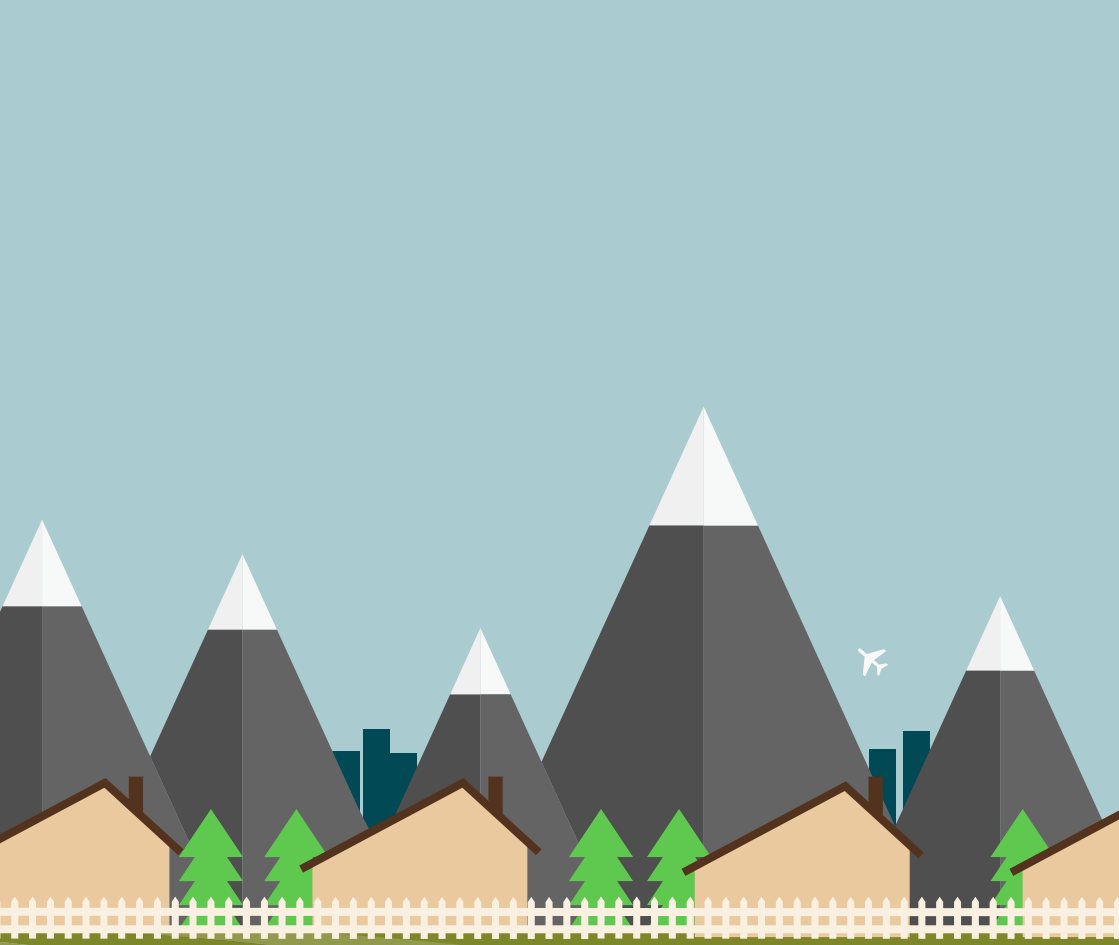

SHAPING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Landscapes and Urban Design

SCOTT M. ROULIER

Praise for *Shaping American Democracy*

"Scott Roulier's wonderfully engaging and approachable book will be essential reading for students of architecture, landscape architecture and city planning, to further their understanding of how design traditions that they may lean on in scholarship and practice—from Frederic Law Olmsted's parks movement, Robert Moses' modernist city, to the form based codes of the New Urbanism, among others—actually foster (or sometimes subvert) the democratic ideals of social equity and civic life. It is a timely contribution to draw the city design disciplines into thinking more deeply about creating just cities and landscapes."

—Tanu Sankalia, *Associate Professor and Director of Urban Studies, University of San Francisco, USA*

"Bringing diverse voices like Thomas Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Law Olmsted, Frank Lloyd Wright, Robert Moses, and Jane Jacobs into conversation with contemporary political theory, Roulier offers not only a rich intellectual history but important insights into how land-use issues raise critical challenges for the future of our democracy. This is an invaluable book that will appeal to scholars and students of political theory, environmental studies, intellectual history, public policy, and urban planning."

—Peter Cannavò, *Associate Professor of Government and Director of Environmental Studies, Hamilton College, USA*

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Shaping American Democracy

Landscapes and Urban Design

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For Julie

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Contents

CHAPTER 1

American Democracy and Its Spaces: An Introduction

This book will view American democracy through the lenses of various landscapes (wilderness and agrarian) and built environments, both urban and suburban. There are many reasons for taking this approach. For one, studying landscapes and cityscapes reveals aspects of democratic theory that are often marginalized. A traditional rationale for democracy is that it helps people come to terms with political authority—providing mechanisms both to legitimize (via elections) and to limit (via constitutionally enumerated rights) the exercise of power. This is what David Held refers to as the "protective" justification for democracy. There are also, Held maintains, "developmental" dimensions to democracy; the idea here is that citizen participation in decision-making, in shaping community outcomes, is an important avenue for self-realization (Held 2006, 35). No doubt the protective and developmental aspects of democracy are critical; however, most inhabitants of democracies spend only a fraction of their time voting or expressing concerns at a city council meeting, bringing a lawsuit against the government for a civil rights violation or campaigning for some political office. Instead, they are socializing with friends, raising families, and earning a living. Theorizing democracy by leaning on urban design, it is argued, shifts the focus from what are commonly regarded as political activities to the social dimension of democracy; that is, it seeks to understand how a substantive commitment to democracy can or should influence the "lived reality" of citizens—explores important concepts like *civic formation*, *social equality*, and *integration*.

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What we discover when we attend to the theme of land and cityscapes in the writings of the authors discussed in this book are thought-provoking arguments about why certain natural or built environments produce conditions that are conducive to (or, alternatively, unfavorable toward) democracy. Put differently, the architects and urban planners featured in this book, as well as our representative landscape advocates, Jefferson (agrarianism) and Thoreau (wilderness), carefully bundle sets of character traits with distinct spatial arrangements, competing to demonstrate that *their* unique combination of traits and spatial designs is most consistent with and best supports a democratic political culture. As a result, these molders of the built environment and their design strategies foreground important lines of inquiry regarding the social dimension of democracy. A brief sample of questions would be: Do citizens trust one another? Are they inclined to cooperate with one another? Are public benefits and burdens shared equally? Are the patterns of wealth and property ownership marked by relative equality or inequality? Are citizens segregated by race and class? As one might expect, since the architects and urban planners featured in this study are not clones of one another, they interpret the social conditions of America quite differently—leading them to prioritize some of the above questions over others, to ignore some questions altogether, and to design their projects accordingly.

If emphasizing landscape and urban planning broadens our understanding of democracy, it is partly a function of inviting new participants into the conversation or, better said, carefully and critically listening to a long-standing conversation that has been conducted by the designers of America's built spaces. If one consults anthologies on American political thought, Jefferson is a central figure, while Thoreau often plays a minor, supporting role. However, one is unlikely to find excerpts from Frederick Law Olmsted, Frank Lloyd Wright, Robert Moses, and the New Urbanists. Yet many of these individuals spent prodigious amounts of time thinking and writing about the prospects for and the critical needs of American democracy. Some of them profoundly influenced the democratic processes and institutions that determine how resources are distributed and how public works are constructed. It stands to reason that, since architects, planners and heads of public authorities actually design and build the spaces where people live, what they think about democracy is important, for, as we will see, these spaces may facilitate or misshape democratic life.

Beyond enriching our understanding of the American democratic tradition in the ways just mentioned, a final reason for featuring landscapes and

cityscapes is that this approach has normative purchase. Specifically, it is asserted that studying the physical embodiments of various democratic theories—that is, the built environments with which these theories are often associated—enables us to assess, at least to some degree, their strengths and weaknesses. For example, this project claims that strains of democratic thought that are the most "individualistic"—that is, those tied to suburbanization and certain forms of modernism—are deficient because they undermine the civic (even ecological) foundations necessary for human community. By contrast, it will be contended that republican or civic-minded theories and their built spaces—that is, Olmsted's landscape designs or New Urbanism—are generally more likely to promote human flourishing. Nonetheless, these civically oriented models can also, unless carefully and wisely planned, give rise to their own problems and contradictions. Overall, this book advances the claim that civic traditions and their associated urban designs strike a better balance: they are better able to accommodate individuality than the individual models are able to develop basic civic practices and values. Significantly, the civic models also tend to be more cognizant of the need to protect natural assets.

Before we proceed, however, more needs to be said about the multilayered concept of democracy and the aspects of it that will be most important for this study. Furthermore, the meaning of "landscape" and "built environment," as well as the philosophical foundations of a spatially oriented social theory, needs some explanation.

Democracy: Justification, Implementation, and Social Content

Defined narrowly, democracy is a method of decision-making that prescribes that people who are subject to public laws and policies should have some influence in shaping them. This definition alone, however, leaves many questions unanswered. First, *why* should people have a voice in formulating law and policy? And second, *how much* influence should people have in public decision-making in order for the process to "count" as being democratic?

In regard to the first or "why democracy" question, many political philosophers argue that citizen consent is the true ground of authority; governments can stake a claim to legitimacy solely on this basis. John Locke maintains, for instance, that since humans are naturally free and equal, no person has an inherent right to subjugate another; instead, legitimate

authority can only be derived from a person's consent (Locke 1986, 54–55). Similarly, Kant suggests only a republic, a regime in which all laws could be affirmed (even if not, in fact, actually made) by its citizens, respects the innate freedom of persons (Kant 1991, 65). In both cases what is being claimed is that only a democratic form of decision-making safeguards human freedom and dignity. David Held calls this the "protective" justification for democracy and notes that protective theorists of democracy "stress its [democracy's] instrumental importance for the protection of citizens' aims and objectives, i.e. their personal liberty" (Held 2006, 35). Besides the protective justification, Held observes that there is also a "developmental" defense of democracy, one which emphasizes the "intrinsic value of participation for the development of citizens as human beings" (35). Developmental democracy, like its protective cousin, can take both liberal and republican forms; John Stuart Mill's *Representative Government* (Mill 1972) is a good example of a liberal developmental theory, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* (Rousseau 1988), an example of a republican developmental theory.

According to democratic theorists, then, democracy is superior to other regime forms for at least two basic reasons—the protection it affords to individuals and because of the human capacities it helps to develop. The second question raised above is slightly different. It takes for granted that democracy is a political good but wonders how it can be implemented in practice, especially in large, modern, heterogeneous states. Indeed, the American experiment departed radically from previous republics in that it explicitly embraced the notion that democracy, contrary to conventional wisdom, had to encompass a large territory. In Federalist 10, Madison famously argues that an "extended" or enlarged republic would accommodate a multitude of factions, thereby preventing any one faction from oppressing others, solving the vexing problem of majority tyranny that had plagued the relatively small ancient republics (Madison 2005, 48–54).

Answers to the question of implementation, it turns out, fall along a continuum: at one end we find theories that attempt to redeem the participatory promise of democracy and at the other end we find theories that emphasize the crucial role of elites. In the next few pages, we will describe some of the key positions along this continuum. The participatory end is associated with contemporary theorists such as Carole Pateman (1970) and Ben Barber (2004). Both are unwilling to forfeit the value of participation's "moral instruction," that is, as Mill describes it, the challenge to "to weigh interests not [one's] own; to be guided, in case of conflicting

claims, by another rule than [one's] private partialities; to apply, at every turn, principles and maxims which have for their reason of existence the common good" (Mill 1972, 233). Participatory democrats contend that their convictions are not naïve. They are aware the Athenian Assembly during the time of Pericles is not an appropriate model for modern nation states with citizens who number in the millions. Instead, Pateman and others call for broadening our definition of political participation beyond office holding and voting. Contemporary participation needs to take place in "many spheres" of society; specifically, Pateman advocates for the democratization of economic life, of the workplace (1970, 21).

If participatory theorists desire to *broaden* our understanding of democracy, deliberative democrats, close cousins of the participatory theorists, want to *deepen* it. What makes deliberation distinctive, argue Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, is the requirement that participants not only voice their opinions and concerns but that they provide reasons for the claims they advance. Thus, Gutmann and Thompson define deliberative democracy as "a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives) justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible" (Gutmann and Thompson 2004, 7). Another way of stating the difference is to say that most aggregative forms of democracy—even if marked by a high degree of participation—take people's preferences for granted, seeking primarily to efficiently and fairly harmonize them, usually through the principle of majority rule (13). By contrast, deliberative democracy does not take preferences as merely given, but demands that people provide justification for their preferences, thereby opening the possibility that some preferences may be rejected because they cannot stand up to the scrutiny of public reason, creating the possibility that people can "expand their knowledge, including both their self-understanding and their collective understanding of what will best serve their fellow citizens" (12).

At the other end of the spectrum, one finds democratic elitism which, unlike participatory and deliberative democracy, possesses a much less sanguine view of the political capacities and public interests of citizens in large, modern democracies. Joseph Schumpeter, in his influential *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, commences with the "classical" (eighteenth century) definition of democracy and, after careful scrutiny, pronounces that it is wholly unpersuasive. According to Schumpeter, the classical understanding holds that democracy is "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common

good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will" (Schumpeter 1976, 250). Schumpeter calls in to question both the concept of the common good and the ideal capacities of citizens attached to it. Following Max Weber, he argues that politics often involves disputes about values (say, political isolation versus international engagement) that are incommensurable, leading to "rifts on questions of principle, which cannot be reconciled by rational argument because ultimate values—our conception of what life and what society should be—are beyond the range of mere logic" (251).[1]

Not only is the classical view's idea of a common good vacuous, suggests Schumpeter, its assumptions about people—that they have the requisite knowledge and interest to make political decisions—are naïve. While people can make reasonably good decisions about their daily lives, about those things that "lie within the little field which the individual citizen's mind encompasses with a full sense of its reality," the same individual has almost no experience with anticipating the probable outcomes of various political and economic policy prescriptions (Schumpeter 1976, 258–259). Thus, far from expressing the true intentions and reasoned conclusions of citizens, public opinion in democracies tends to be manufactured by elites who vie to "create the will of the people" (263).

Having disposed of the classical view, Schumpeter offers a new theory of democracy that he believes is more consistent with empirical reality. Whereas the classical view made the selection of representatives "secondary to the primary purpose" of vesting the "power of deciding political issues in the electorate," Schumpeter's theory reverses the equation and makes the "deciding of issues by the electorate secondary to the election of men who are to do the deciding" (Schumpeter 1976, 269). In other words, with the purported fiction of the common good and politically knowledgeable and engaged citizens exposed, Schumpeter proposes what he considers to be a more realistic model in which people choose between competing teams of elites, upon whose shoulders the responsibility to make decisions more appropriately rests.

Like Schumpeter, Robert Dahl believes that many of our cherished views of democracy crumble under close inspection, though, as we will see, he does not accept Schumpeter's rather pessimistic view that democratic control should be ceded to elites—and thus moves back toward the center of the democratic spectrum. While expressing his admiration for Madison, Dahl begins his classic *A Preface to Democratic Theory* by exposing

the significant "cracks" in the Founder's theory (Dahl 1956, 4). Madison was committed to the republican principle of allowing the majority to express its will through its elected representatives, but he was equally concerned that the majority would use its power to undermine minority rights. Dahl sympathizes with this Madisonian concern but largely rejects Madison's prescriptions. In Federalist 49, for instance, Madison counsels against "the accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive and judiciary, in the same hands"; however, as Dahl points out, if by "power" we mean "constitutionally prescribed authority," then Madison's claim is "demonstrably false, for it is pretty clearly not necessary to every non-tyrannical republic, as an examination of parliamentary, but certainly non-tyrannical, democratic systems like that of Great Britain readily prove" (13). Moreover, as Dahl applies the solvent of critical inquiry to important Madisonian concepts—such as tyranny and factions—they yield vexing *aporias*. The upshot of Dahl's critique of Madison is that the latter relies too much on external constraints and "underestimates the importance of the inherent social checks and balances existing in every pluralistic society" (22).

Another theory, what Dahl calls "populistic democracy,"[2] focuses less on the specter of majority tyranny and, instead, seeks to maximize political equality and popular sovereignty, but he does not believe the latter are absolute goals. He observes that few people would forego privacy, or social stability or income for some incremental increase in political equality: "It is an observable fact that almost no one regards political equality and popular sovereignty as worth an unlimited sacrifice of these goals" (Dahl 1956, 51).

So what alternative, if any, remains? Dahl suggests that the Madisonian and populistic models of democracy pursue a method of "maximization"—the first maximizing non-tyranny and the second maximizing the goals of political equality and popular sovereignty. By contrast, a more suitable method, one based on description, involves studying many individual examples of self-styled democracies and, using this data set, seeks to isolate the "distinguishing characteristics" these polities share and to discern the "necessary and sufficient conditions" for such political organizations (Dahl 1956, 63). According to Dahl, in "polyarchies," his term for modern, heterogeneous democracies, several conditions "exist to a relatively high degree" (84). For example, during the voting period, each person is allowed to vote, and each person's vote is weighted equally. The policy or candidate that receives the greatest number of these votes is

declared the winner. In order for a political organization to be considered a true polyarchy, however, certain conditions also have to be met during the pre-voting period, such as giving members the ability to suggest alternative choices or policies that were not originally slated for consideration, that is, to have some influence over the political agenda (84).

What separates polyarchy from Madison's model is that it is not preoccupied with "constitutional prerequisites" but with "the social prerequisites for a democratic order" (Dahl 1956, 82). Specifically, Dahl argues that polyarchies require a *consensus* on democratic norms (some of which were discussed above) and this consensus, in turn, relies on "social training," carried out by such institutions as families, schools, clubs, newspapers, and churches (76). In the absence of this background consensus, Madison's elaborate scheme of checks and balances would be of no avail. In Dahl's acknowledgement and embrace of pluralism, however, his Madisonian pedigree reappears. Whereas Schumpeter envisions a political system in which an informed but small elite control a politically disinterested and apathetic populace, Dahl envisions a vibrant polyarchy with multiple nodes of influence (133)—an extended republic governed not by a cadre of elites or a tyrannous majority but by a multiplicity of parties and interest groups.

The purpose of the foregoing primer of democratic theory has been to introduce some of the traditional models and, most important, to point out that theorists have tended to emphasize the political questions of justification and implementation—the why and how. While not ignoring these concerns completely, this book will focus attention on a different question: the "what." That is, beyond our interest in justification and process, what, if any characteristics and values, do we associate with democracy? What does democracy look like at the social level?

In order to better understand the social dimension of democracy, we need to recognize that democratic societies tend to be inflected in one of two directions, toward individualism or communalism. As to the first, Tocqueville famously explicates the nexus between democracy and individualism, why it is that "in ages of equality every man seeks for his opinions within himself" (Tocqueville 1981, 395). Whereas in aristocratic societies classes "are strongly marked and permanent" and the members of each class become "more tangible and more cherished [by each other] than the country at large," in democratic societies people identify with the whole, the "duties of each individual to the race [being] more clear" (396). Paradoxically, however, when people view others as equal citizens,

Tocqueville claims that "devoted service to any one man becomes more rare"; though the "bond of human affection may be extended," it is simultaneously "relaxed," leaving the individual more room for her own concerns and pursuits (396). Again, while "aristocracy had made a chain of all the members of the community, from the peasant to the king, democracy breaks that chain and severs every link of it" (397). In short, Tocqueville argues that when the social landscape is leveled—and no one is born a master or slave, a patrician or a peasant—citizens of a democracy incline toward individualism, believing they "owe nothing to any man, they expect nothing from any man; they acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands" (397). In this vision, democracy as a regime form is touted for the liberty it affords its citizens—its ability to unchain individuals from (often suffocating) traditions and institutions and to unleash their energy for self-exploration, expression, and development. This individual-oriented democracy[3] manifests itself in several spatial forms, including the wilderness tradition of Thoreau, Wright's radically decentralized "Broadacre City," and Moses's urban modernism.

If Tocqueville helps us to understand the relationship between a liberal individualism and democracy, the opposite tendency, that democracy would turn toward communalism, is best summed up in the word "republicanism," which Gordon Wood reminds us "added a moral dimension, a utopian depth, to the political separation from England," an expectation of a radical re-ordering of both politics and society, based on the ideas of the great thinkers and republics of antiquity (Wood 1993, 47–48). The literal meaning of "republic" (*res publica*) is the notion that a government, the thing or "res," is not the property of a single person or small group of persons but belongs to the people, the "publica." Republican ideology, then, contrasted sharply with monarchical and aristocratic thinking in which the public good was subordinated to the interests of ruling elites (54–55). The Founders who espoused this philosophy were acutely aware of a republic's fragility, for while monarchy could rely on fear and force, republics had to rely on the "willingness of the individual to sacrifice his private interests for the good of the community—such patriotism or love of country—… demanded an extraordinary moral character in the people," the inculcation and preservation of public virtue in the citizenry (68).

The firm foundation for the public good and its attendant virtues, believed republicans, was not merely a political restructuring, that is,

replacing monarchy with democracy, but also a *social restructuring* that (largely) dismantled social hierarchies. In short, America would be governed by the principle of equality. There was not, however, full agreement about what this principle entailed. On the one hand, some colonies and their leaders were willing to consider bold measures to ensure *equality of condition*—such as "agrarian legislation limiting the amount of property an individual could hold and sumptuary laws against luxury" (Wood 1993, 64). On the other, equality was understood as equal opportunity, which implied that there would be room for distinctions, an "equality which is averse to every species of subordination beside that which arises from the difference of capacity, disposition, and virtue" (71). There was disagreement and ambivalence about the degree of social leveling that should pertain; nevertheless, the basic principle of equality formed the core of republicanism. The republican form of democracy[4] is echoed in much of Jefferson's agrarianism and, architecturally, is best represented in this book by Olmsted's public parks and the designs of the new urbanists.

The history of American politics can be viewed, at least in part, as a rivalry between these two visions of a democratic society—one emphasizing individual liberty and the other emphasizing the importance of community. Alan Altshuler frames this rivalry as one between what he calls "public ideo-logics" and "private ideo-logics"—the former requiring some regulation of private property and of individual choice in order to promote the general welfare and the latter defending private property rights and individual choice against such public demands (Altshuler 1999). As noted earlier, one of the purposes of this study is to closely examine various landscapes and urban designs that implicitly or explicitly advocate for one vision or another in order to gain new perspectives and insights that can help us to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the individualistic and civic paradigms.

Space: Landscapes and Urban Design

The conversation about the relationship between physical space and politics in America can be traced to the Founding. The founding generation, for example, sparred over the appropriate size of republics: whereas the antifederalist writer "Centinel" built his case on "the opinion of the greatest writers [of antiquity] that a very extensive country cannot be governed on democratical principles" (Ketcham 1986, 234), James Madison urged his readers to embrace an "extended" republic, by which means alone

majority tyranny could be avoided and individual liberty preserved (Madison 2005, 53). When Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in the early nineteenth century, spatial politics took on a new valence. Tocqueville sought to weigh the effect of America's physical geography on its democratic evolution. He reached the conclusion that the Europeans overestimated the impact of "geographic position" upon the "duration of democratic institutions," for South America enjoyed the same propitious setting, yet with very different political results (Tocqueville 1981, 192–193). The relative success of American democracy, Tocqueville decided, was more attributable to its laws and customs—its habits of the heart. And, by the end of the nineteenth century, Frederick Jackson Turner was wondering what impact the closing of the frontier, the crucible in which he believed each succeeding generation of Americans had been formed, would have on America's future (Turner 1947).

With the "spatial turn" in the humanities and social sciences at the end of the twentieth century, the conversation about space has become more sophisticated. The goal of this section is, first, to define the meaning of the key terms "landscape" and "built environment," and second, to provide a brief account of the some of the key figures in philosophy and geography whose ideas help to elucidate the critical connections between democratic theory and various spatial settings of political and social life.

We begin with the concept of landscape. The primary landscapes discussed here—agrarian and wilderness—*cannot* be distinguished from the built environment by claiming that these spaces are somehow "untouched" by humans (McKibben 1989; Vogel 2016). The agrarian landscape has been profoundly shaped by human hands and tools, and the "wilderness" has been mapped by satellites and physically penetrated by human exploration. In other words, landscape "always already" denotes human interaction with nature. Having said this, it is also true that there is a long tradition of employing landscapes as foils to spaces that have been *more* intensely settled and transformed by humans, thus the common tropes of rural versus urban or the notion of wilderness marking the boundary of civilization. For the purposes of this study, it is not necessary to insist on a rigid, binary notion of "built" versus (more) "natural" environments; the borders between the two are better understood as shaded and somewhat permeable. That is, landscapes, such as the agrarian and wilderness, and built environments, such as suburbs and urban cores, fall on a continuum that indicates various degrees of human involvement with and alterations of nature.

Without exaggerating the differences between them, we can at least attempt to make some conceptual distinctions between landscape and planned urban spaces by noting that landscape is uniquely associated with the visual or what Jeff Malpas refers to as the "spectatorial," the best example being the genre of landscape painting (Malpas 2011, 11). Once we remember that landscape is always a "view" or "representation"—whether a cinematic image, a painting, or even a word picture in poetry or prose—this alerts us to a landscape's ideological character. In other words, what landscapes occlude is as important as the images they project, for "landscapes can operate to embody, conceal, and support forms of power, especially the power of money and class" (vii; and Mitchell 1994). Conversely, landscapes operate in an ideological fashion not only to veil insidious forms of power but also to "reveal"—to cast a particular moral, political, or social vision, to express a compelling way of being in the world. It is this double-edged sword of landscape—what it simultaneously suppresses and underscores, its complex ideational content—that will be examined here.

Finally, it is helpful to note that the landscape artist or writer is not simply standing outside of the frame but necessarily takes up a position within it. As Malpas describes it, landscape is best understood as a "place": "a place that itself encompasses that artist's own situation in, or in relation to, that landscape" (Malpas 2011, 5). In the present study, it will be argued that Jefferson and Thoreau, our two advocates for an agrarian and wilderness landscape respectively, are attempting to represent not only their personal experiences of particular places, say Monticello or Walden Pond, but also, more ambitiously, the American landscape writ large—to articulate and defend their view of the democratic community's proper orientation to its place.

Of course urban plans and architectural objects also carry an ideological content; if they did not, they would not be worth examining in a book-length treatment like this one. Still, it is fair to say that landscape's visual emphasis, its essentially "representational" character, makes the link to ideology stand out. If one insists on a hard conceptual distinction between landscape and urban design, the spectrum referenced above, indicating different intensities of human interaction with and alterations of what are normally considered "natural" places, would probably be the best measure.

One final way to draw some distinctions between landscape and built spaces is to turn to the work of Hannah Arendt. For her, agricultural space

is the preserve of human labor, which is an activity tightly bound to the biological processes of life—"growth, metabolism, and eventual decay" (Arendt 1958, 7). While labor is vital to sustaining life, every individual laborer, she notes, will ultimately expire and be absorbed back into the cycle of nature. From an Arendtian perspective, the agrarian landscape (and presumably wilderness) is intimately associated with "life"—a process "that everywhere uses up durability, wears it down, makes it disappear, until eventually dead matter, the result of small, single, cyclical, life processes, returns into the over-all gigantic circle of nature herself, where no beginning and no end exist and where all natural things swing in changeless, deathless repetition" (96). But labor is only one of three dimensions of the *vita activa* identified by Arendt. As we will soon discover, the remaining dimensions—work and action—are tied more closely to the built environment.

If "life" is the distinctive human condition of labor, then "worldliness," Arendt suggests, is the human condition that corresponds to work, an activity that provides "an artificial world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings" (Arendt 1958, 7). And, finally, "plurality"—"the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth"—is the human condition associated with action, an activity that does not rely on the mediation of things and "engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the conditions for remembrance" (8–9). In *The Human Condition*, Arendt chronicles how the "social" dimension of human life—large-scale production, mass consumption, and giant bureaucracies tied to modernity—profoundly reshaped the *vita activa* as conceived by the ancients. This seismic cultural shift in the modern period meant that private concerns and activities eclipsed public life: *animal laborans* usurped the place of *homo faber* and *zoon politikon*. This is the broader theme of her book, but for our purposes we will borrow her concepts of "work" and the "public" to illuminate the political importance of built spaces.

According to Arendt, one definition of the public realm is the space that is common to all of us and is distinct from our privately owned places. This public realm or "world," as noted above, is the outcome of the work of *homo faber*, "who fabricates the sheer unending variety of things, whose sum total constitutes the human artifice" (Arendt 1958, 136). And this human-wrought world, she emphasizes, is indispensable for social and political life: "To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, *relates*

and *separates* men at the same time" (52). This is a crucial passage for understanding the project at hand. The architects and planners discussed in this book designed spaces to "relate" and "separate" people in what they considered to be a uniquely "democratic" manner. Our task, then, is to try to understand and evaluate these different spatial schemes.

For Arendt, the words and deeds that create and sustain political communities, what she calls "action," are not, temporally speaking, related to "eternity" but rather to earthly immortality. Unlike eternity, whose coordinates are unknown to mere mortals, immortality depends on physical permanence and continuity. She explains that "if the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal men" (Arendt 1958, 55). The nexus of words and deeds that ennoble and provide purpose for human communities—or that resist tyranny and injustice when necessary—must be remembered, passed down, so that the community can endure and not be extinguished like the objects of labor. But individual humans and the communities they inhabit are inherently fragile, and therefore they need architects and planners to do the "work" (in Arendt's idiom) of building a common world that provides the "stability and solidity" which can be counted on to "house the unstable and mortal creature which is man" (136). It is, then, the built environment that carries a community through history. What Arendt teaches us is that political communities, especially democratic ones, are not constituted simply by shared identities (racial or ethnic) or by basic political beliefs, a political creed, but rather by a common, physical space, which shelters and nurtures democratic institutions and social practices (d'Entreves 2014).

Having defined and explored the concepts of landscape and built environment, we can further our understanding by turning to the academic field of geography, which provides valuable material for helping us think about politics from a spatial perspective (Williams 2016), to consider the ways in which American democracy has been influenced by urban design. Edward Soja encapsulates the basic claim this way: "Geographies … are consequential" (Soja 2010, 104). They are not merely the "background onto which our social life is projected"; rather, "the geographies in which we live can have both positive and negative effects on our lives … [are] filled with forces that can hurt us or help us in nearly everything we do, individually and collectively" (104; 19). Geographers like Soja and David Harvey have, for instance, written insightfully about the ways in which geography creates and sustains social inequality, a concern particularly

relevant to democratic theory, given democracy's goal of providing equal opportunities for its citizens. Nonetheless, though our spatial surroundings present themselves to our senses at every moment, paradoxically the consequences of this palpable, spatial reality are often hidden (Harvey 2009, 52).

In contrast to the physically-visible-yet-socially-invisible impact of geography, we pay close attention to the policies of governments, especially to the burdens and benefits these policies bestow, for example, tax structures and appropriations bills. The relevant point is that these taxing and spending policies are constantly being debated and contested and become the focal point of party competition. Design decisions, however, often fly under the radar—rarely receive the same attention and vetting—though they play an important role in the distribution of social benefits and burdens. Harvey argues, for example, that "allocational decisions … on such things as transport networks, industrial zoning, location of public facilities, and location of households [have] inevitable distribution effects upon the real income of different groups in the population" (Harvey 2009, 51). To cite just one example, he points to the common lack of synchronicity between employment opportunities and housing availability, a dynamic that worsens as urban areas grow.[5] His basic argument is that accessibility to services, job opportunities, and other resources carries a *price*, measured by the necessity of overcoming distance and spending valuable time. Similarly, proximity—which he defines as the effects of being close to something we do not directly use—frequently imposes *costs*. Households near sources of pollution or noise, for instance, pay higher cleaning bills, incur increased health risks, and face substantial loss of property values. In sum, as the "spatial form of the city changes," says Harvey, "[so does] the price of accessibility and the cost of proximity for any one household" (57).

That these effects of geography rarely command much attention is true, but that does not explain *why* this is the case. Soja believes the root of the problem is epistemological: the simple, physical view of space tends to "imbue all things spatial with a lingering sense of primordiality … an aura of objectivity, inevitability and reification" (Soja 1989, 79). In other words, this physical concept of space obscures the meanings humans attach to spaces they inhabit. The physical paradigm of space engenders a kind of epistemological blindness; people forget that while space may be "given" in some essential way, "the organization of space is a product of social translation, transformation and experience" (79). Political scientists

Clarissa Rile Hayward and Todd Swanstrom concur with Soja's claim that geography is "consequential," even if its operations are not fully appreciated. Using a slightly different idiom, they note that urban injustice is often "thick" precisely because its "imbrication with physical place renders it difficult to see … and difficult to change" (Hayward and Swanstrom 2011, 4).

Perhaps more than any other thinker,[6] the philosopher Henri Lefebvre pulled back the veil to reveal space as something more than a mere container—that is, as a human artifact. In his book, *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre claims that there are at least three different modes or ways of thinking about the human constitution of space. The first he calls "spatial practice," which includes the physical construction or demarcation of space as well as the spatial practices or routines that give it continuity (Lefebvre 1991, 33). One might think, for instance, of an outdoor market that is literally set up several mornings a week, including the established patterns of commerce—of buying and selling—that take place there. This is space we primarily "perceive" (38). "Representations of space" constitute the second mode for Lefebvre and refers to "knowledge, to signs and to codes… (33). This type of space is "conceived," as distinct from perceived, and it takes the form of blueprints, comprehensive planning maps, and images; in other words, it is the space of "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (38). This notion of space will obviously play a prominent role in our discussion of the featured architects and planners. The final mode or category is "lived space," what Lefebvre calls "representational spaces." With this appellation, Lefebvre intends to point out the symbolic meanings people attach to spaces; it is the space "imagination seeks to change and appropriate," one that conjures reminiscences and feelings. Thus, a little league baseball or softball diamond for many people is more than a mound of dirt, chalk lines, and a green grass border. Instead, such a space may elicit memories of summer, of family and friends, of personal achievement or the agony of defeat.

If anyone is attuned to the "production of space," it would be the planners, urbanists, and architects whose stories we follow in the pages of this book. Specifically, the claim is that these individuals consciously design (though the social effects of their designs are often different than what they imagined or intended) and organize spaces to align with their ideas about democracy. It will be argued, however, that not all designs succeed in creating spaces that *both* establish the conditions for individual flourishing *and* a civic-oriented community, crucial aspects of a democratic society.

Outline of Chapters

In Part I, we examine the democratic visions of Thomas Jefferson and Henry David Thoreau, representatives of the agrarian and wilderness traditions. As will be our method throughout this book, we will attempt to both sympathetically and critically engage these authors, trying to explicate their theories while attending to the dissonances and inconsistencies that emerge. In Chap. 2, "American Pastoral: Jefferson's Agrarian Republic," we observe that Jefferson endorsed an agricultural way of life because he believed it fostered virtues indispensable for democracy, and we survey his policy prescriptions aimed at preserving democracy in his beloved Virginia and in the country at large. Unfortunately, as had been the case since the ancient world, the physical demands of agriculture and the scale required to make higher profits, tempted Jefferson and his planter class to adopt the brutal practice of slavery that fundamentally contradicted his own democratic principles and program. In the twentieth century, the chapter notes, Wendell Berry describes how the process of "unsettling" America passed from the plantation to large-scale corporate agriculture, with dire consequences for the land and rural communities. Given this crisis, neo-agrarians have attempted to "re-scale" and re-think agricultural practices to redeem Jefferson's promise.

In Chap. 3, "Democracy Gone Wild: Thoreau and the Wilderness Tradition," we follow Thoreau from Concord to Walden Pond—and back again. While Thoreau is not apolitical, he is wary of governmental power that compromises the integrity of individuals by implicating them in activities to which they object. In contrast to his descriptions of the restraints placed on individuals in civil society, he describes nature's vast expanses and watery depths as icons, visual representations of the expanses and depths of the human soul, which invite self-exploration and development. By cultivating an outsider's view, Thoreau sees like a prophet and is able to call out his fellow citizens for their wanton destruction of nature and the injustices perpetrated upon other human beings. Nevertheless, it is argued that Thoreau's anemic theory of citizenship undercuts some of his most cherished values, for it tends to rule out the sustained and coordinated—as opposed to (Thoreau's own) episodic—political action required to prevent the degradation of nature and persons. Although Thoreau, for his part, maintains a mostly skeptical posture toward politics, the book does not argue that there is a *necessary* correlation between a wilderness-focused worldview and political quietism, pace the plethora of contemporary

environmental groups and their activities. Many who follow in Thoreau's footsteps, however, advocate for the protection of wilderness precisely because they, like him, recognize both its intrinsic worth and its instrumental value as an important space for self-discovery and development.

These "primary" American landscapes comprise the backdrop for what follows, for they exercise a profound influence on the planners and architects featured in this book. In making decisions to preserve or destroy wilderness or pastoral areas; in attempting to blend their designs with unique landscape features; in creatively imitating and including pastoral or wild elements in their schemes; in acknowledging their constituents' nostalgia for and desire to connect with the primary landscapes; that is, in ways big and small, from suburban developments to urban infill projects, these primary landscapes and their associated values are as integral to the thinking of planners and architects as primary colors are to the visual artist.

In Part II, we examine the writings and built spaces of two figures—arguably America's most celebrated landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, and its best known residential architect, Frank Lloyd Wright—whose ideas and works are emblematic of the two strains of democracy we have identified, the communal and the individualistic. In Chap. 4, "Olmsted's Public Parks: Civic-Spirited Design," we note that Olmsted and many of his nineteenth-century contemporaries expressed alarm over increasing social segregation in America and its attendant loss of civic spirit and fraternity. To address these two problems, Olmsted's great park designs sought to promote communal belonging and to provide spaces for rejuvenation, yielding personal as well as civic benefits. Whether the ambitious social goals Olmsted set for his parks could be reached, this chapter claims, is doubtful. Psychological research, for instance, questions the notion that social contact alone—such as that promoted by Central Park's Mall—turns strangers into acquaintances or establishes the basis for community action. Also unconvincing is Olmsted's claim that park beauty would have a positive "moral" impact on visitors. Nevertheless, research does provide support for the notion that spending time in nature (or in spaces that imitate nature, like Olmsted's parks) has regenerative properties that can be leveraged for social as well as personal benefit. In regard to social control critics, one would have to admit that Olmsted and other conservative-leaning elites took steps to ensure that park visitors would comport themselves in an orderly, "bourgeois" manner, but Olmsted also

expended great amounts of time and energy publicizing the park to the city's most disadvantaged citizens—recruiting the sick and indigent to experience its amenities—and fighting against other elites who attempted to restrict access to these civic spaces. Though Olmsted may have over sold the benefits of his parks, this chapter concludes that Olmsted was a fierce and public-spirited advocate for creating and preserving aesthetically pleasing spaces for all, not just the few.

Neither a design for a single urban space nor a general municipal blueprint to be replicated in as many regions as possible, Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City was, instead, an audacious plan to dismantle or abandon all existing cities. Predicated on the notion that each person or family unit was entitled to the use of at least an acre of land, to universal social credit, and to free basic utilities, this radically egalitarian plan, it is contended, was merely the platform to achieve his overriding purpose, to wit, the nurturing of individuality, which he fêted more than most Americans dare. It is this plan we examine in Chap. 5, "Democracy and Individuality: Frank Lloyd Wright's 'Broadacres' and the 'Burbs.'" Whereas the material prerequisites attached to Broadacre City may be admirably democratic, in terms of politics Broadacres' citizens are distressingly disempowered. For instance, at Broadacres' most privileged level of government, the county, Wright entrusts architects with sweeping powers, with little discussion of legal or constitutional checks. In the event, the great cities of America were not leveled, as Wright had hoped, but the "horizontality" of his vision *did* come to pass; suburban development spread and sprawled like a cancerous growth. Thus, the book argues, instead of Broadacre City—Wright's promised incubator of individuality—America, more often, received the Levitt brothers' built environment of mind-numbing sameness, enormous tracts of cookie-cutter houses, surrounded by few cultural or recreational amenities. Nonetheless, Wright's work is important for it highlights democracy's promise to deliver a superior "lived" reality, one that architecturally provides an environment built to human scale and, economically, meets basic human needs. It echoes Thoreau's and others' insistence that, rightly understood, democracy's greatest asset is the freedom and encouragement it provides for individual development, even if a suburban tableau like Broadacres is not the ideal blueprint for achieving it.

In Part III, we consider the Janus-faced character of urban modernism and the design movement dedicated to mitigating its worst effects, namely, New Urbanism. By using the disparate tools of design and high finance, Robert Moses built an intricate network of bridges, parkways, and tunnels

that expertly bound together the (geographically separate) five boroughs that compose New York City, and it is he, the consummate modernist planner, that occupies our attention in Chap. 6, "Democratic Ambivalence: Robert Moses and Modernist Urban Planning." At first glance, it was difficult to question Moses's democratic bona fides: he built scores of playgrounds, parks, and parkways in the City and on Long Island—providing hardworking city dwellers with the recreational opportunities and mobility they craved. On second glance, however, not only did Moses co-opt ostensibly democratic institutions, he was also responsible for evicting hundreds of thousands of residents and destroying the integrity of dozens of neighborhoods and ecologically sensitive sites. The main purpose of this chapter, then, is to highlight Robert Moses's democratic inconsistency and, by extension, to explicate the *democratic ambivalence* of the modernist design philosophy he embodied.

In search of principles for good urban design, Jane Jacobs, who led a successful fight against Robert Moses's plan to build an expressway through Washington Square Park in her beloved Greenwich Village, rejected the modernists' abstract, sterile plans and turned her attention to traditional neighborhoods that boasted vibrant social and economic life. Some of her better known conclusions are that healthy neighborhoods contain a mixture of uses—residential, governmental, cultural, and commercial. Neighborhoods, Jacobs argues, are living social organisms: while they *cannot* be easily conjured in a modernist test tube, they *can* be destroyed if key elements are removed or environmental circumstances are altered. Architects like Peter Calthorpe, Daniel Solomon, Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Stefanos Polyzoides, and Elizabeth Moule—the founding mothers and fathers of a movement known as New Urbanism—took these basic ideas and further amplified and extended them. This movement is the focus of Chap. 7, "Democracy and Civic Ecology: New Urbanism from Jane Jacobs to Peter Calthorpe."

After a lengthy explanation of the movement's goals and basic design strategies, the narrative hones in on one figure, Peter Calthorpe, who arguable provides one of the most substantive theoretical accounts of the movement. A foundational concept in Calthorpe's writings is what he calls "philosophic ecology," which provides a foil to and an implicit critique of built spaces that eschew planning and regulation in favor of an unconstrained market. Specifically, Calthorpe identifies two key problems—suburban sprawl and a flagging civic life—and intimates that the two problems are related. Unfortunately, this latter claim lacks both clarity and support

in his writings. This chapter seeks to fill in some of the gaps—both theoretical and empirical—in his argument, explaining both how sprawl undermines civility and how anemic civic life breeds suburbs. As the empirical literature referenced in the chapter indicates, the jury is still out on what New Urbanism has accomplished. It seems, for instance, that its civic and environmental promises have been only partially redeemed. Nevertheless, it is argued that new urbanist experiments should receive further support because, compared to the modernist style of Moses or suburban sprawl, New Urbanism has at least attempted to redress an imbalance between the private and public, has attempted to reconstitute some notion of the Commons, and has also made sustainability a design priority.

Part IV, the final section of the book, contains Chap. 8, titled "Democratic Designs: Weighed and Measured," which provides a critical assessment of the democratic purchase of the various models presented in the foregoing chapters. To accomplish this, a variety of metrics will be applied. For instance, research conducted by Robert Putnam and others has demonstrated a strong correlation between communities that possess high levels of social capital and good governance. This chapter examines what we have learned about the ability, or lack thereof, of certain spatial arrangements to produce social cooperation and trust. A second metric employed is the "capabilities approach," developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. In comparing societies—in our case, urban design models—the capabilities approach is interested in what people are empowered to do or be. The central question here, then, is how built spaces nurture and support—or, alternatively, restrict and undermine—basic human capabilities. Besides the metrics of social capital and combined capabilities, we will also consider how various designs seek to preserve the dignity and equality of citizens. In this section, we turn to Clarissa Rile Hayward's work on identity. She argues that identity is formed not only by internalizing key narratives or stories but also through the influence of institutionalized norms and practices and their material manifestations. Specifically, this section examines the racialization of space, which, in some configurations, lessens the status of individuals and thereby betrays the democratic goals of equality and integration. Finally, there is an inescapable materialist bent to discussions of landscape and urban design. In the broadest sense, the material world is what we refer to as nature. The democratic body politic is wholly dependent on it—for the materials with which it builds, for its biological sustenance, and even for its aesthetic and moral inspiration. Sustainability, then, is the final measure.

A concluding chapter acknowledges the weaknesses and imperfections in the urban forms most closely associated with the republican or civically oriented version of democracy (Olmsted's public projects, New Urbanism), but argues that these forms and strategies, nevertheless, generally outperform the designs most closely associated with individualistic versions of democracy (sprawling suburbs, urban modernism). On every *social* measure of democracy—nurturing civic virtues and dispositions, promoting individual flourishing and capabilities, protecting the equal status of citizens, and facilitating integration and diversity—the Olmstedian and new urbanist models, it is argued, are pointing in the right direction.

Notes

1. Even if a citizen body could agree on most values, it would still disagree about specific policies: "health might be desired by all, yet people would still disagree on vaccination and vasectomy" (Schumpeter 1976, 252).
2. Dahl, it turns out, is equally skeptical of this model, which subscribes to the "rule" that "in choosing among alternatives, the alternative preferred by the greater number is selected" (Dahl 1956, 37). Dahl provides several critiques of popular rule, including the observation that, when there is an *equal* division of preferences in a society, deadlock ensues and, in such cases, populistic democracy biases "the policy-making process in favor of all individuals who prefer policies requiring government *inaction* and against all who prefer policies requiring government *action*" (41). This paradigm also ignores the serious problem of differences in intensity of preference. Dahl concludes his critique by suggesting that political equality and popular sovereignty are not absolute goals.
3. As one might anticipate, there are many possible definitions of "individualism." The type of individualism to which Thoreau aspired and the type Wright hoped to nurture in Broadacres' residents could be characterized as Millian, *sans* J.S. Mill's utilitarian commitment. Mill asserts that the "free development of individuality is one of the leading essentials of well-being," and he approvingly quotes Wilhelm von Humboldt's formula, which states that "the end of man…is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole" (Mill 1972, 124–125). What Wright himself *embodied*, as did Robert Moses, might best be described as a romantic, Faustian individualism, the need to express one's uniqueness by imposing one's will on the external world, while the individualism most often associated with Wright's Broadacres' progeny, suburbanites, highlights the importance of economic choice and the ownership of private property, a libertarian individualism (Friedman 1962; Nozick 1974).

4. For a more contemporary account of republicanism defined as non-domination, see Philip Pettit's *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Iseult Honohan's *Civic Republicanism* (New York: Routledge, 2002) provides a good taxonomy of republican virtues.
5. The migration of jobs from cities to suburbs, for example, is one trend that has significantly altered the spatial form of cities, one consequence of which has been high rates of unemployment in urban cores. Harvey explains that, because of "inelasticity and locational inflexibility in the supply of low-income housing," lower-income people find it difficult to relocate to suburbs. If they do obtain employment in the outer rings, low-income residents must contend with the loss of time (opportunity costs) and expensive transportation outlays, for public monies tend to be invested in roadways linking suburbs to one another and in high performance suburban to downtown systems, none of which benefit the urban poor (Harvey 2009, 63–64).
6. For an excellent historical overview of the philosophy of place and space, see Edward Casey's *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (1998).

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PART I

Primary Landscapes

CHAPTER 2

American Pastoral: Jefferson's Agrarian Republic

In a letter addressed to John Jay, dated August 23, 1785, Jefferson responds to a question Jay had posed about the degree to which America should get involved in and rely upon foreign commerce. Jefferson acknowledges that "our people" want to "take a share in the occupation of the ocean," and that it is the responsibility of the government, then, to protect this "right … in the transportation of commodities, in the right of fishing, and in the other uses of the sea" (Jefferson 1975, 384). He notes, however, that the protection of American interests would be costly. Jefferson is certain that the property of American citizens, both at sea and at port, will be violated and that they will be insulted or even imprisoned for spurious debts and purported breaches of contract. Those wronged will expect their government to aid and defend them. Consequently, he concludes: "our commerce on the ocean and in other countries must be paid for by frequent war" (385). If the government turns a blind eye to these violations of right, it will only invite further violations—"weakness provokes insult and injury, while condition to punish it often prevents it"—but the resolve to punish will necessitate the building of a formidable naval force, and a massive expansion of government itself.

It is in the context of this discussion of trade versus domestic production, of an outward versus an inward-oriented economy, that Jefferson expresses his strong preference for an agrarian republic. Indeed, if the founders were genuinely "free to decide this question," unmoved by the noisy constituencies clamoring for commercial development, they would realize, on sober reflection, that America possesses "lands enough to

S.M. Roulier, *Shaping American Democracy*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68810-7_2

employ an infinite number of people in their cultivation" (Jefferson 1975, 384). If it were a small island nation, not blessed with natural resources, perhaps America would be compelled to turn to trade and commerce for its survival. But that was not the case: an enormous and bountiful continent (as Jefferson's hired explorers, Lewis and Clark, would later confirm) offered the rare chance for a flourishing agrarian economy. As Jefferson makes clear, however, he does not favor agrarianism simply because it avoids some of the dangers of commerce but because it possesses its own positive benefits. That is, Jefferson believes that an agrarian economy is not only geographically possible and politically wise but also morally superior.

What follows is an explication of the "positive" case Jefferson makes for an agrarian economy and how it dovetails with and undergirds his democratic theory. That does not mean that we will simply accept Jefferson's pronouncements at face value. When subjected to greater scrutiny, the Jeffersonian pastoral reveals multiple agrarian voices—intriguing strains and contradictions—that presage many of the problems and possibilities that future agrarians would inherit. In addition to the tension between the democratic and aristocratic elements of the Jeffersonian heritage and the vexing question of how Jefferson hoped to preserve America's agrarian character in an industrializing age, this chapter focuses on the issue of scale. Specifically, it argues that farmers and landowners—not only in Jefferson's day but in antiquity and in contemporary society—have been seduced into "growing" their operations in order to reap the benefits of greater economies of scale, often with devastating consequences for the land and vulnerable people. Whether the ethical and democratic core of Jefferson's vision can be salvaged is an open question.

The Virtues of a Yeoman's Republic

Presumably, agrarianism would protect Americans from unnecessary foreign entanglements—a major political point in its favor. But what were its moral advantages? What kinds of people or citizens would agrarianism produce? What moral harvest could Americans expect from the choice of an agrarian republic? To answer this question, we turn to Jefferson's head-to-head comparison of "cultivators" and "artificers" in the same letter to Jay: "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting

bonds … [By contrast] I consider the class of artificers as the panderers of vice and the instruments by which the liberties of a country are generally overturned" (Jefferson 1975, 384). We begin with Jefferson's observation about "vigor." While farming is more cerebral than popularly imagined—knowledge of climate, soil, botany and basic mechanics are indispensable, to name only a few—it is widely acknowledged to be corporally strenuous. Financiers may fill their brains with numbers but they can do so while reclining on a couch. The same could not be said of famers who courageously and (in the best case) enthusiastically confront long days of physical toil. This willingness to work hard and the strong constitution such labor begets compliments the next characteristic, independence.

Barring natural disasters—in an agrarian context this would include drought or an insect invasion—smallholders who possessed a solid work ethic could feed their families and generate a surplus to feed a few others. Self-sufficiency is the cornerstone of self-government, morally and politically. Being one's own man or woman economically buffers a person from undue influence, helps that person to be more objective when weighing moral and political questions. Notice that both the virtuous work ethic and the virtue of self-sufficiency are rooted in the land. For Jefferson, land was the fundamental economic basis of a democratic society and, to this end, in his "Proposed Constitution for Virginia," Jefferson recommended that his state should grant 50 acres to those who were bereft of property in order that they might provide for their own sustenance and fully participate as citizens (Sheldon 1991, 74). Moreover, by possessing title to their own little piece of America, yeomen, Jefferson suggested, would be "wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds"; in other words, he argued that they would fight to defend their own and their neighbors' property.

By contrast, Jefferson's choice of the word "artificers," as opposed to manufacturers, is intended to emphasize the negative aspects of commercial pursuits. It implies that those so employed would be "artificial"—untrustworthy, manipulative—out to make a buck, even through trickery. Presumably the hard-working, self-sufficient farmers would, on the other hand, be more authentic, genuine—people of their word. Again, this assessment has both political and moral consequences. A monarchy can rely on an oppressive standing army to impose its will; democracies, by contrast, require consent, which presupposes channels of honest and reliable communication. At the social level, too, trustworthiness is a key ingredient, a form of social capital that largely determines the health of

communities and their networks of interpersonal relationships. Most important, even if "artificers" peddle their goods in a truthful manner, their livelihood depends on expanding the compass of their fellow citizens' needs. As Rousseau ably describes this dynamic in his *Discourse on Inequality*, new gadgets, designed to save time and exertion, quickly morph from conveniences into new "needs," so that "cruelty in not having them was worse than possessing them was sweet" (Rousseau 1988, 37). Anticipating Madison Avenue, Jefferson predicts that these "panderers of vice" would transgress the natural boundaries of need and give people first a taste of (and then an addiction to) luxury. Consequently, as Plato warned centuries before Jefferson, to meet people's demand for luxuries, a government would be compelled to engage in foreign trade and to build the necessary legal, bureaucratic, and military capacity to deal with inevitable conflicts that would ensue (Plato 1979, 44–46), and thus we come full circle to the stated evils Jefferson wished to avoid.

It is important briefly to acknowledge that Jefferson—coming from the planter class—is unsurprisingly biased in his assessment. No doubt partisans of commerce could set up their own simplistic moral ledgers, in which they cast agrarians as dull, dimwitted, parochial, and inclined toward every conceivable prejudice—character traits that do not augur well for people who are to be self-governing—while those engaged in commercial pursuits are broad-minded, worldly wise, innovative, and tolerant. That said, our task is to explicate Jefferson's thought, not Hamilton's.[1]

In sum, the alternative political economy Jefferson offers is a republic of assiduous, self-sufficient yeomen possessing moderate passions; such a citizenry would alleviate the need for large government and foreign entanglement. In an oft-quoted paean to agriculture, found in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson summarizes his view that farming provides the only secure foundation for virtue:

> Those who labor the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption in morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. (Jefferson 1975, 217)

It is in this fertile soil of agrarian-based virtue that Jefferson confidently plants his small "d" democracy. To say that each component of Jefferson's

democratic theory is *only* conceivable in an agrarian context would be claiming too much; however, to ignore the profound influence of his agrarianism on it would be a distortion. Indeed, Jefferson's democratic theory—as we will see—largely presupposes or seeks to preserve an agrarian republic.

Jefferson's Small 'd' Democracy

Most Americans, if they have read anything from Jefferson, are familiar with the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson and four others, including John Adams and Benjamin Franklin, comprised the committee charged with the task of drafting the Declaration. After several discussions about the ideas that should provide the structure for the argument, Jefferson was tapped to write a draft.[2] The document's central argument, surrounded by lofty rhetoric and specific grievances against the British Crown, is a shining example of classical liberal thought. Indeed, students would be forgiven if they were tempted to skip their reading of John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* and decided, instead, to meditate on the first two paragraphs of the Declaration—a magnificent distillation of Locke's ideas. People, Jefferson claims, are endowed by their creator with inalienable, natural rights. The sole purpose of government, resting on the consent of the governed, is to secure these rights against infringement. Beyond the Declaration, probably the next best known Jefferson writing is his "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" in Virginia—or, if not the bill itself, at least its content—a vigorous defense of religious freedom, vouchsafed by the separation of church and state.

What is often less appreciated than Jefferson's classical liberalism is his "democratic" thought. The natural rights language of the Declaration and his comments about religious freedom do not contradict the venerable democratic tradition; if anything, they support it. Nonetheless, it is in three other areas—fiscal policy, education, and ethics—that Jefferson's democratic leanings can be clearly seen, and the egalitarianism inherent in his agrarian landscape animates and informs all three.

As Minister to France, Jefferson traveled widely and conversed with people of all social classes. What he encountered, up close and personal, was a highly stratified society and, as he explains in a letter to his friend James Madison, this gave him an opportunity to "reflect on that unequal division of property which occasions the numberless instances of wretchedness which I had observed in this country and all over Europe" (Jefferson

1975, 396). He describes how property in France is "absolutely concentrated in a few hands" and, as one would expect from such a pyramid-shaped society, the numberless poor comprise the base. What puzzled Jefferson was how there could be so many destitute, when they were willing to work and there were huge tracts of uncultivated lands. The answer, he discovered, is that these lands—that would otherwise have supported many people—were enclosed by the aristocracy for hunting game. Indignant, Jefferson vowed to engineer and support legislation that would "subdivide" property in America, hoping to prevent the misery he witnessed in Europe.

His determination to "subdivide" property was a frontal assault on the aristocratic practice of primogeniture. The great families of Europe would not have retained their status if, in every generation, the family's property had been distributed among all the heirs; to avert this dilution of wealth, the property was given, *in toto*, to the oldest son. While Jefferson never advocated for an equal distribution of property, which he called "impracticable," he believed that inheritance laws must be different in a democracy: "the descent of property of every kind … to all the children, or to all the brothers and sisters, or other relations in equal degree is a politic measure, and a practicable one" (Jefferson 1975, 396). Jefferson's rejection of primogeniture and his support for egalitarian inheritance laws cannot be divorced from his overarching vision of America as a yeoman's republic, for some significant degree of social leveling was necessary to ensure small holders access to land and to preserve the conditions for democratic agency and citizenship. Jefferson's proposals on inheritance law, then, are not accidental but are linked to both his commitment to agrarianism and democracy.

As a further contrast to an aristocratic distribution of wealth, Jefferson promoted the idea of a progressive income tax, exempting "all from taxation below a certain point, and to tax the higher portions of property in geometrical progression as they rise." This measure, he argued, would "lessen inequality" (Jefferson 1975, 396). Democracy, Jefferson believed, could not abide extreme inequality. Where such economic disparity existed, it was often due to an imbalance in access to land. In these cases, he avers, the "laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right" (397). Again, access to arable land for the common person is central to his argument. Indeed, subsequent to announcing his premise that the earth was given as a "common stock" to human kind, Jefferson makes one of his more radical statements, namely, that if those excluded

from appropriating land for their subsistence are not provided with employment, then the "fundamental right to labor the earth returns to the unemployed" (397).

Finally, we turn to Jefferson's views on education and ethics as key components of his democratic theory. According to Jefferson, the kings, nobles, and priests of Europe rule over subjects whose minds are filled with nothing but prejudice. While this general condition of ignorance is favorable to the maintenance of established religion, aristocratic privilege, and monarchical power, it is the enemy of enlightenment and deadly to human happiness (Jefferson 1975, 399). By contrast, Jefferson wishes to educate citizens and dispel superstition. He contends, for example, that his home state of Virginia's bill for the "diffusion of knowledge among the people" is the only sure "foundation [that] can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness" (399). Jefferson is an advocate of public education, supported by taxpayer dollars. Miserly with public monies—though profligate with his own fortune—Jefferson, nonetheless, had no compunction about appropriating funds for public education, an investment certain to yield enormous social dividends. Moreover, if one started with a democratic premise—the novel idea that the people should govern themselves—the importance of public education was a foregone conclusion. Citizens would be called upon to make local decisions, pace Jefferson's prescription of the ward system,[3] and would be expected to choose wise representatives for state and national offices; none of this would be possible without the requisite knowledge and information. People of means, like Jefferson's own family, might continue to rely on private tutors, but the vast majority of parents would not have the time, money, or educational background themselves, at least beyond the primary grades, to provide an adequate education for their offspring.

However, this formal education, while exceedingly important, rested on a deeper, surer foundation—a moral sense it was intended to augment, not replace. If land were to be the basis of America's material prosperity, the innate moral sense of Americans would ensure right conduct. True—it would be hard to imagine another American who placed more value on learning; Jefferson read voraciously, devouring texts on history and philosophy as well as technical subjects like horticulture and architecture. His personal library comprised the seed of what would become the Library of Congress. Yet, when it came to moral questions, Jefferson had little doubt that the professor possessed no advantage over the ploughman: "State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor," he tells his nephew

Peter Carr, and the "former will decide it well, and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules" (Jefferson 1975, 425). A democratic nation of ploughman, therefore, was not a fantasy dreamed up by an American *philosopher*, was no mere chimera: the nutrient of an inborn moral feeling augured for political success. For Jefferson, in other words, democracy was not a mere slogan without an empirical anchor; he took it as given, both from personal experience and general observation, that his fellow humans, together with whom he would accept the task of governance, possessed common sense and were divinely equipped with a moral sense. In a remarkable passage, he describes the latter this way:

> He who made us would have been a pitiful bungler if he had made the rules of our moral conduct a matter of science. For one man of science, there are thousands who are not. What would have become of them? Man was destined for society. His morality therefore was to be formed to this object. He was endowed with a sense of right and wrong merely relative to this. This sense is as much a part of his nature as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling; it is the true foundation of morality … The moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of man as his leg or arm. (424–425)

Guided by an internal moral compass and supplied with the basic skills and knowledge from a system of public education, citizens, Jefferson believed, would be empowered to govern themselves.

The description of Jefferson's entwined theories of agrarianism and democracy presented so far could be likened to a landscape painting by John Constable—a representation attempting to capture a rural scene's beauty and simplicity. If we remember what we learned in the introduction about landscape, however, there is often much going on under the surface. Landscapes—as constructs, as re-presentations—often conceal tensions and forms of power. Thus, as we zoom in closer on Jefferson's agrarian ideal, what emerges is a mental terrain more reminiscent of a TMW Turner landscape painting, something richer, darker, and more complex.

The Jeffersonian Pastoral: A Closer Inspection

Jefferson, of course, was not alone in promoting an agrarian way of life. Leo Marx, for instance, links Jefferson's ruminations to antiquity, specifically to the pastoral genre, best exemplified by Virgil's *Eclogues*.

Commenting on the First Eclogue, "The Dispossessed," Marx observes that, seen in its Roman context, the pastoral ideal is located between two darker forces, the city of Rome and the "encroaching marshland" (Marx 1964, 21). The key figure in the poem, the shepherd Tityrus who embodies the pastoral ideal, "is spared the deprivations and anxieties associated with both the city and the wilderness. Although he is free of the repressions entailed by a complex civilization, he is not prey to the violent uncertainties of nature. His mind is cultivated and his instincts are gratified" (22). Thus, in the pastoral tradition, rural life is depicted as an ideal balance, a serene middle landscape between the urban and wilderness environments. By the time we get to Jefferson, claims Marx, the pastoral ideal "had been 'removed' from the literary mode to which it traditionally had belonged and applied to reality" (73)—specifically, this "real place is located somewhere between the *ancien régime* and the western tribes" (122). When pressed further, however, Jefferson's writings often fit the pastoral genre precisely because they expose some of the contradictions and tensions within his agrarian prescriptions, expose to the reader his own wrestling with the gap between the agrarian ideal and actual social conditions. Similar to other "literary works called pastorals," Jefferson's "do not finally permit us to come away with anything like the simple, affirmative attitude we adopt toward pleasing rural scenery" but rather "manage to qualify, or call into question, or bring irony to bear against the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture" (25).

What follows is a brief account of some of Jefferson's mental gymnastics as he sought to reconcile his agrarian preferences with countervailing forces. One dilemma was the siren song of British industry and the mimetic desire it stoked in Americans. As Peter Cannavò points out, Jefferson was not opposed to all development; he embraced scientific and technical advancement in agriculture and home-based manufacturing (Cannavò 2010, 359). What he was keen to avoid was the typical sequence of development in which manufacturing led, inevitably, to a further package of evils—such as capital accumulation, the dominance of financial institutions, and increased urbanization. Building on the work of Drew McCoy, Cannavò argues that Jefferson's strategy "entailed substituting spatial for temporal expansion" (359). In other words, Jefferson hoped the vast continent would absorb American energy and satisfy desires for a long period of time, retarding "temporal expansion," that is, the normal sequence of events in which the corruption of politics and morals followed on the heels of manufacturing.

A second, related dilemma was that even if manufactured objects were not produced in America, they were, nevertheless, required. Jefferson conceded, for instance, the inferior quality of American clothing: "Those of cotton will bear some comparison with the same kinds of manufacture in Europe; but those of wool, flax and hemp are very coarse, unsightly, and unpleasant" (Jefferson 1975, 216). Rather than changing the country's economic base to manufacturing and taking the risk of potentially undercutting agrarian-rooted virtue, Jefferson preferred to make Europe America's "workshop": "…let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench, or twirling a distaff. Carpenters, masons, smiths, are wanting in husbandry: but, for the general operations of manufacture, let our workshops remain in Europe. It is better to carry provisions and materials to workmen there, than bring them to the provisions and materials, and with them their manners and principles" (217). Any economic loss entailed by relying on trans-Atlantic exchange, he urged, would be more than compensated for by the "happiness and permanence of government" (217). While not an elegant solution, Jefferson at least acknowledges the problem of relying on foreign manufacturing.

If the first dilemma highlighted the desire of many of Jefferson's fellow citizens to pursue industrial development, to not fall behind, to not miss out on the technological advancements and opportunities of the moment, the second focused on the practical need for finished products. However, the agrarian program he advocated to resolve these dilemmas—his hope that a surplus of land and the workshops of Great Britain could ward off an industrial tsunami in America—was thwarted by the War of 1812. As he put it in a letter to William Short: "Our enemy has indeed the consolation of Satan on removing our first parents from Paradise: from a peaceable and agricultural nation, he makes us a military and manufacturing one" (quoted in Marx 1964, 144). A mere 30 years after his *Notes on Virginia*, then, circumstances had forced Jefferson to adapt. Faced with new problems, his stubbornness shifted in the opposite direction. He now refused to allow external forces such as British attacks on American shipping (and piracy more generally) to reduce Americans to a lesser standard of living—"to be clothed in skins, and to live like wild beasts in dens and caverns." Domestic manufacture, he now argues, must be placed "by the side of the agriculturalist" (Jefferson 1975, 549). An agrarian vision, already precarious in 1785, had been reduced, by 1814, to a mere regulative ideal.

Jefferson's significant modification of his agrarian vision, thrust upon him by changing circumstances, is only one example of how it fits Leo Marx's

description of a "complex" pastoral—one that manages "to qualify, or call into question, or bring irony to bear against the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture" (Marx 1964, 25). Another example would be the deep fissure that runs through his program, separating, not always in a tidy manner, the democratic and aristocratic versions of his agrarian philosophy. To begin with the democratic version, it can be illustrated by considering Andrew Jackson's appropriation of Jefferson. When political scientists and historians discuss the evolution of the American party system, they often do so by breaking the process down into at least five, discrete "systems" or periods (John Aldrich 1995). The second system, the beginning of which is marked by Andrew Jackson's resuscitation of party competition in the early nineteenth century, is usually characterized as an elaboration upon Jefferson's political philosophy. Jackson, like Jefferson, opposed "internal improvements," and he adopted Jefferson's jurisprudence of "strict constructionism," refusing to re-charter the National Bank. Most important, Jackson presided over a far-reaching democratization of society, as the newly minted Democratic Party sought to secure universal white manhood suffrage by sweeping away state property qualifications for voting, thereby cementing its appeal to small farmers and to pioneers settling west of the Alleghenies. When we say that Jackson paid homage to Jefferson we mean that Jackson, like his predecessor, was a staunch defender of the common person, that many of the small "d" democratic concerns cited above—guaranteeing access to cheap land and ensuring a more equitable distribution of wealth—were also Jackson's. In short, the political lineage represented by Jackson and Jefferson, the political ideology, had a decidedly democratic bent. It is this democratic agrarianism that most people have in mind (and the type of agrarianism this chapter intends) when referring to the Jeffersonian ideal.

To counter this narrative, however, one only need set foot on Jefferson's 5000 plus acre estate, Monticello, Italian for "little mountain," or to saunter through his 40-year architectural experiment, the Palladian-inspired residence that was its crown jewel. If a broad plain dotted with family farms is an apt spatial representation of the democratic strain of Jefferson's agrarianism, then Monticello is a fair representation of the aristocratic. As Robert A. Ferguson puts it in his *Reading the Early Republic*, "Monticello projects a primal sense of hierarchy from the tip of its dome to the under cellar of its hidden slave quarters" (Ferguson 2006, 221). If the Jacksonians and then the later nineteenth-century Populists took their cues from Jefferson's democratic pronouncements, the antebellum figures of John Taylor of Caroline and George Fitzhugh, along with the twentieth-century

Nashville School of southern agrarians, looked to Jefferson's aristocratic example (Kimberly Smith 2003, 18–20). According to Kimberly Smith, the aristocratic agrarians "stressed leisure as the defining characteristic of rural life"; therefore, they drew "an important distinction between the dull, routine, laborious part of farming and the ennobling, intellectually stimulating scientific part" (19). And it was more than just the "science" of agriculture that developed, thanks to leisure. John Crow Ransom would argue that southern "squirely" agrarianism preserved a broader, humane way of life, at least defined in the "eighteenth century [manner of] social arts of dress, conversation, manners, the table, the hunt, politics, oratory, [and] the pulpit" (Ransom 1977, 12). By contrast, says Smith, the democratic agrarians emphasized labor, rather than leisure: "For democratic agrarians, the virtues of yeoman farmers arise directly out of their constant, physical, and laborious relationship to the land" (Smith 2003, 20). Smith concludes that Jefferson's "mélange" of democratic and aristocratic agrarianism, where small family farmers worked their own soil and read Homer in their spare time, was an ideal achieved by very few (18). Most agriculturalists took one path or the other, casting doubt on any possible unity of an agrarian program or Jeffersonian inheritance.

We have noted a tension between democratic and aristocratic agrarianism, both of Jeffersonian origin, but, so far, they have been described mostly in positive terms, as a difference between the virtues and values associated with agricultural labor, on the one hand, and agricultural induced leisure, on the other. Economically speaking, however, what largely distinguishes these two types of agrarianism is the scale of production involved. Focusing on the issue of scale is important, for it reveals conundrums for each type. The democratic agrarian strain of Jefferson promotes smallholdings, envisions a yeoman's republic. Most smallholders, however, lived on the razor's edge; they were vulnerable to the tiniest fluctuations in price and their investments could be ruined by a couple of bad harvests. By contrast, those with larger estates, the aristocratic agrarians, while not immune from common agricultural depredations such as price variation, drought, and pestilence, benefited from economies of scale. Nevertheless, while these larger estate owners may have had greater margin for error, they were entangled in economic relationships marked by unhealthy dependence and exploitation. In short, for aristocratic agrarianism, the contradiction between the normative ideals of Jeffersonian democracy—represented by the hardworking, virtuous smallholder—and the economic and political implications of large-scale agriculture is especially acute.

The Physiocrat Temptation

The betrayal of the normative ideal notwithstanding, the "temptation" to "go big" was real. That agriculture on a large scale was more economically viable was a proposition defended, among others, by an eighteenth-century group of French thinkers known as the physiocrats, whose views were well-known to Jefferson. The fundamental postulate of physiocracy was that agricultural labor *alone* was productive (Roll 1978, 132). They believed agricultural labor, exclusively, could produce surplus value; that is, farmers were capable of growing more food than was necessary for their subsistence and seed. According to Eric Roll, since the physiocrats did not have a clear idea of "exchange-value," they thought of the surplus "entirely in terms of the differences between use-values which had been consumed and those which had been produced" (129). That farmers alone produced surplus value, however, did not guarantee that they would be rewarded with a position of honor in the physiocrats' imagined social hierarchy. Quite the contrary was true. The physiocrats adhered to a tripartite social structure, at the very top of which was perched the landlords. Below them were the "sterile class" of artisans and merchants who could not create value themselves but only "transform the value created in agriculture" and, finally, the truly productive class of farmers who produced not only their own food but also rent for the landowners and agricultural resources for manufacturing (132). Quesnay's famous "Tableau oeconomique" cleverly describes how the agricultural surplus, the *produit net*, circulates among these classes (130).

At first glance, physiocracy may seem to be a feudal encrusted doctrine, and it did appeal to the landed classes. Nonetheless, the physiocrats were also early advocates of laissez faire and, as noted by Roll, when it came to economic problems, the physiocrats were "already forced to look through capitalist glasses. For them the owner of the land had already become a capitalist who employed the laborer" (Roll 1978, 136). When all the land inevitably passed into private hands, as the physiocrats assumed it would, cultivators, they claimed, would become mere wage laborers. The hired hand's wage, says Turgot, "will be determined [anticipating Karl Marx's theory of exploitation] by the subsistence he needs (the *strict necessaire*). But the bounty of nature will return to him more than that; and the surplus will become the proprietor's rent" (137). Whereas Jefferson's agrarian ideal promoted a republic of similarly situated yeomen, the physiocrats' vision highlighted economic forces that would ultimately tip the scales toward inequality.

Jefferson's democratic theory notwithstanding, in actual fact he and his fellow planters were the beneficiaries of this tilted scale. The planter class gleefully extracted surplus value—an activity made all the more lucrative by the existence of chattel slavery. Raising the specter of slavery further sharpens the collision between the virtues Jefferson extolled—independence, hard work, and moderation—on one side, and the vices of mutual dependence (between master and slave), exploitation, and greed, on the other. One possible way to resolve this conflict might be to view plantation, slave-based agriculture as a short-lived and, ultimately, misconceived economic experiment. On this interpretation, when slavery inevitably disappeared the distribution of agricultural lands in the former slave holding areas could be rebalanced. In the debate over the profitability of slavery in the United States, for example, some historians have defended the claim that slavery was not economically viable and was in its death throes, even before the Civil War. Interestingly, neo-confederates have seized this argument in order to prove that the Civil War was avoidable—laying the blame for a national tragedy at the doorstep of impatient and aggressive northerners.

Recent scholarship, however, has not been kind to the "slavery was not profitable" crowd. The thesis was first made popular by Ulrich Phillips. Later scholars in the "Phillips School" elaborated on their founder's work and adduced further evidence of its veracity. The general outline of the argument consisted of three points: that southern planters tended to overproduce cotton, which would lead to a price collapse; that climate and soil set a geographic limit to plantation agriculture; and, finally, that nineteenth-century society was urbanizing, and slavery was "incompatible" with urban conditions (Fogel and Engerman 1974, 62–63). In their book, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery,* Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman thoroughly rebut each component of the non-profitability thesis. By employing equations that account for more variables and armed with more comprehensive data sets, Fogel and Engerman conclude that slave-based agriculture was actually quite lucrative. On average, slave owners earned about ten percent on the market price of their slaves: "the corrected computations [of earlier scholars] revealed … average rates of return equal to, or in excess of, the averages which obtained in a variety of nonagricultural enterprises" (70). Furthermore, Fogel and Engerman developed an index of "sanguinity" that demonstrated that slaveholders, on the eve of the Civil War, "not only expected their social

order to endure but foresaw an era of prosperity" (105). In short, what might be called the physiocrat temptation to scale up agricultural production was alive and well on the eve of the Civil War: consequently, so was the glaring contradiction between the Jeffersonian democratic ideal and the exploitative practices associated with large-scale plantation agriculture.

If we move beyond the American experience and consider agricultural practice and scale in a larger, historical frame, we find that the Jeffersonian ideal of smallholders begins to look even more isolated and fragile. The Spartan city state of the fifth-century BCE offered its soldier-citizens a very narrow compass for political activity in its Assembly, essentially providing for up or down votes on proposals drafted by the council. Nevertheless, Spartan virtues (bravery, simplicity, frugality, selflessness) were extolled by Plato and many other philosophers, and the influence of the Spartan mixed constitution, designed by Lycurgus, can be seen in ancient and modern societies, from the Roman Republic to the British Constitution. Yet the entire Spartan scheme was predicated on the subjugation of large numbers of indigenous people, helots, who farmed huge tracts of land to feed its citizens. Furthermore, the political institutions and processes of the Athenian city state, which were radically democratic—allowing all (male) citizens to participate in lawmaking, using the method of lottery to choose officials, and providing pay for office-holding and jury duty—were dependent, similar to its oligarchic cousin in the Peloponnese, on slave labor for the leisure required to access the privileges of Athenian citizenship (Finley 1977, 72). Finally, large-scale, slave-based agriculture was even common during the vaunted Roman Republic, especially from the third-century onward. Whereas there were very few slaves in the early republic, after the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE) the villa system in agriculture took root; with it, came an exponential increase in slavery (Christ 1984, 43). This narrative, of course, could extend further, encompassing European feudalism from the tenth to the fifteenth century. The claim is this: since the advent of agriculture, there have always been people who farmed for their subsistence, who practiced it on a small scale, but the recognition of the *economic* advantages of large-scale agriculture, despite the *ethical* compromises that accompanied it, has led warrior castes and democratic states alike to embrace it.

No twentieth-century figure has written so eloquently about this tension between the virtues of agrarianism and its exploitative propensities as Wendell Berry. To capture this divide, Berry uses the concepts of

"settling" and "unsettling." Settling, Berry notes, "is formulated eloquently in some of the letters of Jefferson" (Berry 1996, 13). The central idea found therein is the same as the one that inspired the Homestead Act, he says, and is essentially the notion that "as many as possible should share in the ownership of the land and thus be bound to it by economic interest, by the investment of love and work, by family loyalty, by memory and tradition" (13). The goal of settlers, or "nurturers," as he also calls them, is "health"—of their land, their families, communities, and country (7). Conversely, the characteristics of "unsettlers" or exploiters are avarice and the appetite for conquest—their goals are money and profit (3, 7). Berry's agrarianism, though it honors certain Jeffersonian values, identifies new, insidious forms of exploitation and sounds the alarm about its perpetrators. In a phrase, the new source of exploitation is industrial scale agriculture; multinational corporations have replaced the physiocrats' landlords: "The corporate revolution has determinedly invaded the farmland," he says bluntly (7). During the early Republic, Jefferson had waged war against what he believed was an overweening central government. A fierce advocate for agrarian independence, Berry shares both Jefferson's doubts about big government solutions, on the one hand, and Jefferson's more sanguine views of democratic politics practiced at the local level, on the other. Berry, however, is in a better position to see that concentrated economic power is just as dangerous as concentrated political power. To be fair, Jefferson too denounced financiers and industrialists; nevertheless, he mostly cast them as the enemies or alter egos of agrarians, rather than anticipating their hostile takeover of the agrarian enterprise.

The objects of exploitation, too, are different in Berry's version. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the barbaric institution of slavery was on full display. As we will discuss in more detail in a later chapter, insidious forms of racial discrimination did not, of course, disappear with the passage of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. While cognizant of what he calls the persistent "hidden wound" of America—that is, shameful race-based violence and discrimination—Berry, the most articulate agrarian voice of his generation, calls attention to the plight of family farmers and the destruction of their communities. The twentieth century, it seemed, reduced Jefferson's "chosen people of God" to desert wanderers. According to Berry, the catastrophic destruction unleashed, first upon Native Americans, has now been loosed on "the small farms and the farm communities, upon the shops of small local tradesmen of all sorts, upon

the workshops of independent craftsmen, and upon the households of citizens" (Berry 1996, 6). In other words, Berry describes how corporate farms cultivate more acreage with fewer workers and fewer machines. The result is a death spiral for rural communities: as rural populations decrease, so do the demand for local services, leading to further de-population.

Moreover, it is not simply farmers and their communities but the land itself that suffers from industrial scale agriculture. Already in the nineteenth century some people were starting to acknowledge the negative impact of farming techniques associated with plantation agriculture and, by the twentieth century, with the advent of industrial agriculture, the environmental devastation was undeniable. Berry became an outspoken critic of these destructive practices, and Kimberly Smith rightly credits him for his oversized role in the "greening" of the agrarian tradition (Smith 2003). A prophetic voice from rural America, Berry has been decrying the destruction of the conditions of human survival, namely, the soil that supports life. In regard to the loss of topsoil and soil fertility, he explains: "The fields lose their humus and porosity, become less retentive of water, depend more on pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers. Bigger tractors become necessary because the compacted soils are harder to work—and their greater weight further compacts the soil" (Berry 1996, 10).

Berry describes this tragic set of consequences—the destruction of farmers, their communities and the land—as a form of domestic colonization:

> It is an irony especially bitter for Americans that, having cast off the colonialism of England, we have proceeded to impose a domestic colonialism on our own land and people, and yet we cannot deny that most of the money made on the products that we produce in rural America—food and fiber, timber, mineable fuels and minerals of all kinds—is made by people in other places … The exploitative interest is absent from the countryside exactly as if the countryside were a foreign colony. The result of this separation is that the true costs of production are not paid by the exploitative interest but only suffered by the exploited land and people. (Berry 1987, 185–186)

Whether the colonial analogy is apt, the reader will have to decide. One thing, however, is clear: the mistreatment of farming people and their land, as vividly portrayed in Berry's novels and essays, diverges significantly from the ideal originally envisioned by Jefferson.

Conclusion: A Way Forward?

Providing a comprehensive account of the rich and multifaceted agrarian tradition goes beyond the scope of this study. Instead, the goal has been to use Jefferson to illuminate the importance of the agrarian landscape in the American democratic tradition. Beyond a mere tribute, however, we have pressed the Jeffersonian pastoral until it revealed interesting fissures, tensions, and contradictions that foreshadowed various paths future agrarians would have to travel and the problems they would confront. Ultimately, the purpose of any "stress test"—whether applied to a bank, a heart patient or a set of ideas—is not to injure the subject but to identify weaknesses and problems, which, if carefully attended to, may yield greater health. There is, in short, much to admire in Jefferson's agrarian vision; the trick is to redeem and salvage those elements under changed conditions.

Charting a way forward for the agrarian movement is not the responsibility of this project; nonetheless, by way of conclusion, a couple of observations about agrarianism's possible future are in order. First, resisting what Berry refers to as domestic colonization has been the strategy, implicitly or explicitly, of neo-agrarians. In Jefferson's day, soon-to-be Americans pursued non-importation agreements, such as the Continental Association of 1774. After the Boston Tea Party, the British imposed the Intolerable Acts, which, among other things, closed the Port of Boston and took away local self-government rights. In response, the First Continental Congress created the "Association"—a comprehensive boycott of British goods to undermine the profitability of the colonial enterprise. Nothing as formal as the "Association" exists today, but it is fair to say that increased anxiety about the safety and resilience of our industrial food system and concerns about its environmental impact have led many people to at least partially "boycott" corporate food and to seek alternative food systems, for example, the movements to buy produce grown locally or CSA (community-supported agriculture). In these activities and the concerns they express, we see an enduring link between agrarianism and democracy.[4]

Besides resisting domestic colonization, we could borrow another framing device, namely, the attempt to "right size" decaying industrial metropolises. One of the central agrarian dilemmas this paper has identified is the problem of scale—the need to discover a balance between the economic vulnerability of small farms and the exploitative bent of large-scale agriculture. Right sizing cities involves radically re-thinking planning codes to

allow previously forbidden uses and mixtures of urban space. Similarly, what we might call "right sizing" agriculture would not only involve diversifying monocultural farms and promoting sustainable farming practices in traditionally rural places but also a variety of creative urban farming and community gardening initiatives, efforts that are currently underway.

Whether it is an initiative to resist the industrial food system or a new form of agricultural innovation, many of these movements break down the binary thinking of rural versus urban that has been so much a part of the agrarian tradition (Northrup and Lipscomb 2004) and, in the process, reconnect more people to the soil and teach them to value natural systems. The classical virtues of agrarianism—independence, hard work, commitment to the land/ecosystems, restrained appetites, the fostering of community—still flourish in some traditionally rural places, but they may also flourish in some new spatial and social forms than the ones envisioned by Jefferson.

Notes

1. See Hamilton's Report on Manufactures in the *Selected Writings and Speeches of Alexander Hamilton* (Hamilton 1985) in which he argues, among other things, that an extensive manufacturing sector will provide several different options for employment for those not engaged in (or not interested in) agriculture, will attract immigrants to settle an vast continent, and will complement the agricultural sector by increasing aggregate demand for farm products.
2. Adams and Franklin made a few editorial changes, but the voice of the document's primary writer was unmistakable when it was presented to the Continental Congress for consideration. Ultimately, Congress removed about a quarter of the document's verbiage, including language critical of slavery that was unacceptable to some southern delegates. What remained was an *apologia* of human liberty that has inspired Americans from the Founding generation to the present and has even been admired by some of America's staunchest enemies.
3. In his Letter to John Adams, October 28, 1813, Jefferson explains his proposal to divide every county into wards of five to six miles square, each having a free school. He intended to "impart to these wards those portions of self-government for which they are best qualified, by confiding to them the care of their poor, their roads, police, elections, the nominations of jurors, administration of justice in small cases, elementary exercises of militia; in short, to have made them little republics…."

4. See for instance Ali Berlow's Food Activist Handbook (North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, Berlow 2015) and Jules Pretty's Agri-Culture: Reconnecting People, Land and Nature (New York: Routledge, 2002).

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CHAPTER 3

Democracy Gone Wild: Thoreau and the Wilderness Tradition

While Thoreau spent a significant amount of his time wandering, sometimes in far off places like the Maine woods or the Cape, an essential intellectual itinerary was defined by his travels between the village of Concord and Walden Pond, and it is the movement of body and mind between these two places that will provide the primary structure for this chapter. Given this framework—intended to be more thematic than chronological—we begin in the village, with a basic explication of Thoreau's political thought; then we repair to the wilderness, at which point we encounter his philosophy of nature and his aesthetics; finally, we return to the social and political world to assess the fuller implications of his intellectual journey. What we will discover is a "wild democracy"—one in which the primary justification for democracy is the latitude and freedom accorded to individuals. It is a democratic vision that also reserves a special place for nature which, though largely constructed by discursive practices and human concepts, nonetheless possesses a degree of independence from human community, and thus provides a source of refreshment and inspiration for individual development. Nonetheless, where Thoreau and his kind sojourn freely, civic attachments are often attenuated. This uneven posture—an enthusiastic embrace of individuality and a rather reluctant form of citizenship—leads to a paradox: the dignity of individuals and the value of nature, which he frequently extols, are both threatened by social actors and systems that can only be controlled by the coordinated efforts of engaged citizens—an activity that his theory of wild democracy tends to de-emphasize.

S.M. Roulier, *Shaping American Democracy*,
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Politics: A State of Suspicion

At the beginning of his essay, "Civil Disobedience," Thoreau endorses the motto, "That government is best which governs least" (Thoreau 2013a, 1). One political conviction that lies behind Thoreau's preference for a minimalist state, given full expression in "Civil Disobedience," is that the state is often the perpetrator of injustice. If the hands of the state alone were dirty or stained with blood, that would be distressing enough; however, the state depends on various forms of support from its citizens. As a result, even those citizens whose scruples lead them to philosophically reject the state's actions find themselves knee-deep in injustice, their silence implicating them as allies and sympathizers, unless they break away and become the state's enemy. "Law never made men a whit more just," argues Thoreau, "and, by means of their [his fellow citizens'] respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice" (3). The turpitudes of the US government are legion, according to Thoreau, but the two that most disturb him are slavery and the Mexican-American War.

Thoreau's moral objections to slavery are self-evident and lead him to exclaim: "I cannot for an instant recognize that political organ as my government which is the slave's government as well" (Thoreau 2013a, 4). In regard to Mexico, Thoreau describes the sad irony that the nation that once fought for its independence from an autocratic British Empire—the "Revolution of '75"—is now, itself, the source of tyranny: "[When] a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army" (5). As a citizen of the United States, Thoreau is appalled that these injustices are being perpetrated in his name. But, he laments, this is precisely the dilemma posed by government or other group affiliations that are not based on explicit consent; they drag individuals to places they do not necessarily want to go. And it is not simply the moral contamination of the individual for which the state is responsible, contends Thoreau, but also the reduction of people to a subhuman level—to mere animals or machines:

> The mass of men serves the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailers, constable, *posse comitatus*, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level

> with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. (3–4)

This begs the question: what is a just person to do?

Thoreau speaks passionately against half-measures. He mocks those who raise their voice against injustice, who applaud soldiers who refuse to serve, yet continue to sustain the war-waging government by paying their taxes. Neither is voting adequate. If one votes for candidates who support policies to abolish slavery, or at least oppose surrendering fugitive slaves, that is well and good; however, if those candidates lose—or if their policies are not adopted—the franchise has been for naught. Instead, people must cast their "whole" ballot, "not a strip of paper merely" (Thoreau 2013a, 14). What he means by this is to engage in civil disobedience—to defy the state and accept the consequences of imprisonment: "[I]f the evil is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine" (11). This may seem like a fool's errand, Thoreau admits, especially if the resistance is numerically small; however, if *all* people of goodwill and integrity would stiffen their backbones, radical changes could be effected. If the state faces the "alternative to keep all just men in prison, or to give up war and slavery," there is little doubt that injustice will be thrown overboard (14).

So far we have focused our attention exclusively on "Civil Disobedience," but it is worth pausing to note Bob Pepperman Taylor's warning against too much reliance on this text for an understanding of Thoreau's political views. It is *Walden*, he asserts, that represents the culmination of Thoreau's reflections on the "promise of American freedom" (Taylor 1996, 100). Specifically, in *Walden* Thoreau assesses our private and "collective moral options" and forces us to "honestly face the relationship between the nature of our moral commitments and the type of individuals and society we are becoming" (99). According to Taylor, whereas "Civil Disobedience" and Thoreau's other polemical writings—"Slavery in Massachusetts" and "A Plea for Captain John Brown"—could be seen as a "natural completion of the more general political writings that make up the bulk of Thoreau's work," they are *better* understood as "interruptions," distractions from his larger political project (100). "Civil Disobedience" and the other polemical essays, Taylor argues, "focus on the crime of slavery," are "calls to

resistance," a "response to a political emergency"; for this reason, we "should not expect to find in these essays the keys to understanding Thoreau's greater political project and vision" (99–101).

That one finds important political material in *Walden* is a proposition this book does not dispute; indeed, in the section that follows below—the one seeking to articulate how citizens can successfully navigate the troubled waters of majoritarian politics—we turn to *Walden* for guidance. The notion that "Civil Disobedience" is *less* central to comprehending Thoreau's political thought, however, is another matter. While "Civil Disobedience" does deploy some exaggerated rhetoric, as Taylor suggests, it also represents one of the most serious accounts in Thoreau's entire corpus of the dilemmas individuals face regarding the majority's use of political power. It is precisely in "Civil Disobedience," in other words, that Thoreau speaks most like a political theorist, directly grappling with the definition of the state and its appropriate sphere of power vis-à-vis the rights of the individual and offering cogent arguments to justify his personal act of resistance.

Having addressed, at least initially, Thoreau's views on the extent of a citizen's political obligation, we return to the more general question of Thoreau's ideas about what constitutes a good government. As we have seen, governments that implicate their citizens in evil, by asking for direct (via conscription) or indirect (taxation) support, must be resisted. It would, of course, be preferable if a government were designed in such a way that resistance would not be necessary. Thoreau suggests that it is less likely that slavery and war would be pursued if the government is of modest size and capability—and if the appetites of the society it serves are modest as well, so as to obviate the need for foreign entanglements to secure extravagant amenities (Thoreau 2004, 198). Readers familiar with Aristotle know that he described both an ideal state—where citizens ruled and were ruled in turn—and a second best or most practicable regime, what he called "polity," a constitution that combined elements of democracy and aristocracy (Aristotle 1987, 258–263). Thoreau creates a similar taxonomy of ideal and practical forms. On the one hand, he identifies a form of government that is the best (though constantly under construction) that humans have developed in the course of history and, on the other hand, an ideal regime that awaits human beings when they are morally prepared for it. The most practicable form for Thoreau is, of course, "democracy": "The progress from an absolute to a limited monarchy, from a limited monarchy to a democracy, is a progress toward a true

respect for the individual" (Thoreau 2013a, 27). His reference here to respect for the individual (coupled with his well-known aversion to majoritarian politics) is a clear signal that Thoreau does not have in mind a robust, participatory model like that which briefly flowered in Athens. Rather, as his aphorism about the best governments being ones that govern least indicate, Thoreau has a liberal democracy in view, one that scrupulously observes constitutionally established limits. This chastened state, Thoreau muses, might even stretch its humility far enough to countenance individuals who dwell within the compass of its territory living "aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow men"—that is, as quasi nations unto themselves. Such an unassuming government would "prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State," which Thoreau has only "imagined" but has "not yet anywhere seen" (27).

In the ideal toward which he gestures, the notion of government has lost, for all intents and purposes, its materiality. The ideal government, which Thoreau asserts "governs not at all" (Thoreau 2013a, 1), is no more a government than Kant's Kingdom of Ends is an earthly kingdom. Thoreau's ideal, like Kant's Kingdom of Ends, appraises humans from a purely ethical standpoint, describes a society of moral beings who exist—respecting one another, treating each other as neighbors—independent of any state, which most theorists associate with the power of compulsion. Though Thoreau implies often enough that he is ready for such an arrangement, the vast majority of his fellow humans, he seems to think, are not, "for the people must have some complicated machinery or other, and hear its din, to satisfy that idea of government which they have" (1). Until such time as men and women are suited to exist without government, the operative question is this: How should one comport oneself in a democracy such as ours?

To answer this question, we turn to *Walden*, where Thoreau provides a compelling formula: citizens should pursue self-reliance, simplicity, and solitude. We begin with self-reliance. When it comes to starting and completing some project, Thoreau admits, it is nearly impossible to "begin without borrowing," at least in some shape or fashion. For instance, when Thoreau set out to build his own house in the woods, he borrowed an axe, but he paid any debt owed by returning the tool "sharper than I received it" (Thoreau 2004, 89). Indeed, Thoreau's story of borrowing a single tool—and then using it, all by himself, to cut and hew timbers, rafters and studs for his home—is an illustration of how a fundamentally social being

can, nevertheless, enjoy a hefty portion of independence. Self-reliance, however, is difficult to come by with the advent of the modern economy and its elaborate division of labor. With each new layer of specialization, some former capacity and skill possessed by the individual is guaranteed to disappear, to atrophy like a muscle no longer used. And this observation prompts Thoreau to ask, rhetorically, whether there is a logical stopping point in the process of subdivision: "[A]nd what object does it finally serve? No doubt another may also think for me; but it is not therefore desirable that he should do so to the exclusion of my thinking for myself" (45). Better to take up axe, hoe, and pencil, he believes, to live as much as possible by one's own wits and labor, than to be subject to the slow death of losing all ability to act and think, that is, before losing one's basic humanity.

To self-reliance, Thoreau adds the virtue of simplicity. As intimated earlier, there is a correlation between the power and ambition of governments and the appetites and desires of their citizens. States support slavery because it is profitable for some politically influential group, and states engage in conquest, again, because some group of citizens stands to profit handsomely from the acquisition. Since Thoreau does not support these activities, it follows that he would advocate for simplicity, to ward off the fevers of human trafficking and wars of conquest. Moreover, even Lassalle's night watchman state would be less busy if people embraced a simple lifestyle, for "I am convinced," Thoreau avers, that "if all men lived as I did, thieving and robbery would be unknown. These take place only in communities where some have got more than is sufficient while others have not enough" (Thoreau 2004, 167). But it is not merely to remove the temptation for the state to increase its power that people should live simply. Most important, he claims that simple living pays psychological dividends. Repeatedly, Thoreau ruminates on the burden of wealth and property. He expresses sympathy, especially, for those who inherit farms. "How many a poor immortal soul," he asks, "have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its [a farm's] load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and wood lot!" (3). Finally, Thoreau argues that there is a relationship between material simplicity and character; the more one pursues the former the more one is likely to harvest veracity and rectitude. The pursuit of luxuries, however, produces the opposite effect: "I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, and obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not; and I went away hungry form the inhospitable board" (321).

Not only is society often marked by inequality, which produces human misery and breeds contempt of one class for another, but the steps of its dancers and the dialog of its actors lead to incessant commentary on the movements and verbiage of the players. Thoreau compared his village to "a great news room" (Thoreau 2004, 162). Like Plato's cave dwellers, mesmerized by the shadows cast by the puppeteers, Thoreau's compatriots had an unquenchable appetite for new iterations of the same drama, yet Thoreau is certain that he has never "read any memorable news in a newspaper": "If we read of one man robbed, or murdered … or one vessel wrecked … or one cow run over on the Western Railroad … we never need to read of another. One is enough. If you are acquainted with the principle, what do you care for myriad applications? To a philosopher all *news*, as it is called, is gossip, and they who edit and read it are old women over their tea" (91). More often than not, then, Thoreau seeks to fulfill his deepest hunger not with more society but in solitude, the last of his triad of virtues.

Similar to the virtues of self-reliance and simplicity, solitude rewards its possessor with a host of practical advantages. For example, away from society, one avoids all the hassles of dealing with a bad neighbor (Thoreau 2004, 68), and one who lives alone can pursue his own schedule, while he who "travels with another must wait till that other is ready, and it may be a long time before they get off" (69). Although Thoreau relishes his solitude, he takes pains to controvert the notion that this leads him to be a misanthrope. In point of fact, Thoreau frequently entertained visitors. In his cabin, he reports, there was one chair for solitude, "two for friendship, three for society" (135). Thoreau, we must remember, was not holed up in a cabin far removed from human civilization but was living about a mile and a half south of Concord. Still, many of the town folk would inquire whether he did not feel lonesome and melancholy, especially on rainy and snowy days. Thoreau deployed a variety of spatial frames to challenge his interlocutors' association of distance with loneliness, proximity with intimacy.[1] In short, Thoreau both affirms and denies the common sense notion that solitude requires seclusion and deploys spatial metaphors that both reinforce and disturb received spatial expectations. The bond between proximity and sociability, he suggests, is also exaggerated: "I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another" (Thoreau 2004, 129). The opposite, then, may also be true—one can experience a semblance of solitude in a crowd. Thus, the "practice" of solitude, for Thoreau, involves very strategic and intentional

spatial movements (building a rustic cabin outside of town, taking walks in the wilderness and countryside) and, at the same time, he makes it clear that the practice can *also* diverge from common spatial expectations.

It has been argued that in *Walden,* embedded in that work's social criticism, one finds his account of the key human virtues. These virtues—self-reliance, simplicity and solitude—are not, in the first instance, associated with a robust notion of citizenship, with public service and the public good. Instead, they are depictions of the character of strong and resilient individuals, and they align, politically, with the anti-statist philosophy we described at the beginning of this section. For example, if citizens' desires were more modest, if they practiced simplicity, they would place fewer demands on the state, lessening the state's responsibility and, at least in theory, the scope of its activism, creating more space for individual liberty, as Thoreau prefers. Furthermore, all of these virtues require effort to at least partially disentangle individuals from social conventions, obligations, and expectations. Finally, creating some modicum of social distance through the practice of the Thoreauean virtues enables one to affirm that there are limits to political life, that it cannot demand, in the deepest sense, a person's full and exclusive allegiance, affirm that there are other values that compete with politics.

Wilderness: Self-Discovery, Socialization, and the Sublime

Even more than the other two virtues Thoreau promotes—that is, self-reliance and simplicity—his explorations of solitude re-connect his readers to the natural environment. And it is Thoreau's alternating lyrical and philosophical discussions of wild nature that simultaneously reveals nature to be a space that makes possible an entirely new identity and mode of being *outside* of social membership and political citizenship and a space in which individuals are *readied for*—refreshed, fortified and "socialized"—for human community. In short, Thoreau portrays nature as a crucial source of a mature and well-developed understanding of self.

But first a word on the source: it is impossible to invoke the concept of nature or, more specifically, "wilderness," without attending to the linguistic and cultural construction of it. William Cronin reminds us that "far from being the one place on earth that stands apart from humanity, it is quite profoundly a human creation—indeed, the creation of very particular

human cultures at very particular moments in human history. It is not a pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can for at least a little while longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization. Instead, it is a product of that civilization, and could hardly be contaminated by the very stuff of which it is made" (Cronin 1996, 69). That does not mean, of course, that wilderness can be reduced to a linguistic construct or that the physicality of the wilderness does not resist and evade our attempts at wholesale description; wilderness, Cronon freely admits, is "far from being merely our own invention" (70). It *is* to say that our perception of wilderness is profoundly shaped by different cultural lenses, that the Puritan William Bradford's wilderness, with its "wild and savage hue" (Bradford 1956, 17) is quite different than John Muir's "majestic domed pavilion" in which the divine director ensures that there are no "dull moments" (Muir 1911, 80).

The next question we need to address is whether Thoreau viewed his intimate communication with nature as a form of self-fashioning or self-discovery. Because of passages like this one—I set out to "recreate myself" by searching out "the darkest wood, the thickest and most interminable and, to the citizen, most dismal swamp" (Thoreau 1893, 228)—Jane Bennett contends that Thoreau sees his nature wanderings and observations as artful means of self-formation. "My Thoreau," she states, is a "sculptor, his materials are flesh, bones, twigs, rocks, feathers, memories, and dreams; his tools—themselves finely wrought—are words, sentences, acute observations, imagination, hiking shoes and canoes; his product is Nature and the sojourning individual" (Bennett 1994, xxiv). There is ample evidence that Thoreau was, at times, consciously "sculpting" himself; however, as the passages discussed below will demonstrate, it is equally plausible to view Thoreau's quest primarily as the pursuit of what Charles Taylor calls "authenticity." Such a quest seeks "an individualized identity," Taylor says, "one that is particular to me, and that I discover in myself." Taylor explains: "This notion arises along with an ideal, that of being true to myself and my own particular way of being … [whereas earlier generations sought to be] in touch with some source—for example, God or the Idea of the Good [now] the source we have to connect with is deep within us. This fact is part of the subjective turn of modern culture, a new form of inwardness, in which we come to think of ourselves as beings with inner depths" (Taylor 1994, 28–29). Thoreau is a complex figure, and it should be no surprise, then, that one encounters both notions of self-development in his writings, that is, both self-fashioning and self-discovery.

Whether one subscribes to the "making" or the "finding" view, there are at least two dimensions of identity formation that Thoreau develops in his writings. We might do well to think about these as the "deep" and the "wide." During his wilderness sojourn, Thoreau felt compelled to physically measure the depth of his cabin-side pond; this endeavor became for him an important metaphor for another "sounding"—namely, the probing of the depths of his own self. Of course people do not have to wait for the stimulus of "pond-sounding" for them to engage in serious introspection. Still, Thoreau urges that pond-sounding is, nevertheless, a good inducement to self-examination. "A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is the earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depths of his own nature" (Thoreau 2004, 180). Happily, such self-examination is cheap and proximate. Few human beings will have the financial backing and good fortune to be adventurers or famous world explorers; however, Thoreau submits that unexplored continents and opportunities for discovery lie closer at hand than most people realize: "Be rather the Mungo Park, the Lewis and Clark and Frobisher of your own streams and oceans; explore your own higher latitudes… Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought. Every man is the lord of a realm beside which the earthly empire of the Czar is but a petty state, a hummock left by the ice" (310). According to John Nash, wilderness, for Thoreau, "symbolized the unexplored qualities and untapped capacities of every individual… Going to the outward, physical wilderness was highly conducive to an inward journey" (Nash 2001, 89).

If communion with nature inspires introspection, helps us to discover that which is unique, singular, it also, Thoreau argues, expands the self outwardly, revealing our kinship with every living (and even inanimate) thing. Approvingly, Thoreau cites Confucius to the effect that the universe "is an ocean of intelligences. They are everywhere, above us, on our left, on our right; they environ us on all sides" (Thoreau 2004, 130). Thoreau, as we noted earlier, claims not to have felt lonely in the wilderness, and this saying from the Chinese sage goes a long way toward explaining why. For Thoreau, however, this affinity with "an ocean of intelligences" was more than philosophical; it was profoundly felt—emotionally validated:

> I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere

> sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since. Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended me. I was so distinctly made aware of the presence of something kindred to me, even in scenes which we are accustomed to call wild and dreary, and also that the nearest of blood to me and humanist was not a person nor a villager, that I thought no place could ever be strange to me again. (128)

His expressions of his emotional connection to nature were not always as restrained; they could turn saccharine, as when he suggested that "the winds would sigh humanely, and the clouds rain tears, and the woods shed their leaves and put on mourning in midsummer, if any man should ever for a just cause grieve" (133–34). Pathetic fallacy aside, the sentiment seems genuine.

Both a naturalist and a transcendentalist, Thoreau's intellectual and affective connection to nature were firmly rooted both in science and religion. Thoreau was an astute observer of nature and natural processes, and thus he was well aware of the material, biological basis of human existence; he understood that humans were literally a part of nature: "Am I not," he asks, "partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?" (Thoreau 2004, 134). His transcendentalist beliefs were equally influential. God, for the transcendentalists, was not external to creation but immanent within it, and this divine presence could be apprehended through imagination and intuition. This belief system cut in the direction of pantheism—wedding spirit and matter—leading, predictably, to Thoreau's expressions of kinship with nature.

Thoreauvian nature, in sum, extends two invitations: it bids people to explore their inner-continent and to enter into fellowship with itself. Feelings and emotions are clearly an important element in these experiences: one the one hand, there is *astonishment* at the depths of the human self and, on the other, there is *affection* in response to nature's sympathetic embrace. These feelings, however, can be further elaborated and refined by thinking about them as aesthetic orientations. Sometimes, for example, a profound appreciation of a person's inner life is eclipsed by feelings of wonder and awe in the face of nature's magnitude and power and, on other occasions, the warmth of nature's companionship is transmuted into joy as nature becomes more nearly an object of worship rather than friend. That is, Thoreau's experiences can be described in aesthetic terms, as experiences of the sublime and the beautiful.

In *Walden*, in the section titled "The Pond in Winter," Thoreau describes how he cut his way through a foot of snow and ice in order to "open a window under my feet, where, kneeling to drink, I look down into the quiet parlor of the fishes, pervaded by a softened light as through a window of ground glass, with its bright sanded floor the same as summer; there a perennial waveless serenity reigns as in the amber twilight sky, corresponding to the cool and even temperament of the inhabitants. Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads" (Thoreau 2004, 274). In stark contrast to the "newsroom" of the village, with its frenetic activity and emotional volatility, the beauty of the winter pond calms the soul. The "softness" of light, the imperturbability of the water, gives rise to a feeling of serenity. After the winter thaw, in the spring, Thoreau observes a hawk in flight, and in that description, expatiates on his experience of natural beauty:

> When looking up, I observed a very slight and graceful hawk … alternately soaring like a ripple and tumbling a rod or two over and over, showing the underside of its wing, which gleamed like a satin ribbon in the sun, or like the pearly inside of a shell… It was the most ethereal flight I had ever witnessed. It did not simply flutter like a butterfly, nor soar like the larger hawks, but it sported with proud reliance in the fields of air; mounting again and again with its strange chuckle, it repeated its free and beautiful fall, turning over and over like a kite, and then recovering from its lofty tumbling, had never set its foot on terra firma. (305)

Unlike the humans Thoreau encounters, including himself, whose desires often outstrip their means, whose appetites collide with their moral principles—who, in short, must constantly juggle various aspects of their conscious lives just to be in the world with some semblance of psychic integration—there is an effortlessness in the movement of the hawk, a grace, a playfulness—a lightness of being—that engenders a feeling of admiration, of pleasure, in the observer.

In significant ways, Thoreau's descriptions of natural beauty parallel those of his late eighteenth predecessors. According to Edmund Burke, for instance, beauty is inextricably tied to a mode of perception in which pleasure is the dominant feeling. What we call beautiful, in other words, are those objects the perception of which affects the emotions of the observer in a pleasant way. Kant, also, links the beautiful to pleasure. Kant asserts that, when making an aesthetic judgment, a representation of an

object is referred to the human subject, specifically to the subject's feeling of pleasure or pain, instead of being referred to a concept for cognition (Kant 1951, 37).[2] If Thoreau's views on natural beauty bear some resemblance to those of Burke and Kant, what about his conception of the sublime?

For Burke, terror is the ruling principle of the sublime. The sublime object, he explains, is so overwhelming, it so dominates the field of perception, that all other motion ceases: "[A]stonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other" (Burke 1968, 58). Wonder and awe, yes: but there is also apprehension in the observer. One does not draw nigh, in the Burkean account; rather, one pulls up short—is frozen in place. In his travels in the Maine woods, Thoreau vividly describes a similar experience he had while climbing to the summit of Mount Ktaadn:

> Aeschylus had no doubt visited such scenery as this. It was vast, Titanic, and such as man never inhabits. Some part of the beholder, even some vital part, seems to escape through the loose grating of his ribs as he ascends. He is more alone than you can imagine. There is less of substantial thought and fair understanding in him than in the plains where men inhabit. His reason is dispersed and shadowy, more thin and subtle, like the air. Vast, Titanic, inhuman Nature has got him at disadvantage, caught him alone, and pilfers him of some of his divine faculty. She does not smile on him as in the plains. She seems to say sternly, why came ye here before your time? This ground is not prepared for you. Is it not enough that I smile in the valleys? I have never made this soil for thy feet, this air for thy breathing, these rocks for thy neighbors. I cannot pity nor fondle thee here, but forever relentlessly drive thee hence to where I am kind. Why seek me where I have not called thee, and then complain because you find me but a stepmother? Shouldst though freeze or starve, or shudder thy life away, here is no shrine, nor altar, nor any access to my ear. (Thoreau 1988, 86)

This experience, however, does not predominate in Thoreau's writings. More commonly, Thoreau is drawn toward, not repelled by (pace Burke), the sublime object; his appetite is heightened, not chastened. Moreover, our interaction with nature is not a zero sum game, the mysterious aspect of nature does not necessarily undercut or diminish our rational desire to understand its laws of operation; rather, in Thoreau's account of the sublime our experience is broadened for, in *addition* to a nature that is

scientifically measurable, we *also* "require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature" (Thoreau 2004, 306). Nature's laws, then, can be translated into the language of chemistry and physics without all wonder being drained from it, without falling into reductionism; similarly, the mysterious aspects of nature can inspire without deterring rational inquiry: the two ways of experiencing nature must be held in tension.

The contrast with Kant is instructive. According to the latter, in aesthetic judgments we call sublime, nature's magnitude, in the case of the "mathematically" sublime, and nature's might, in the case of the "dynamically" sublime, humiliate (at least initially) the human subject. Nature does "violence" (Kant 1951, 83) to the imagination, because of its inability to comprehend the magnitude of certain natural features, and exposes human frailty in comparison to nature's power. Ultimately, however, the subject discovers a "faculty of resistance" (101) that rises up against and even transcends nature, and this "supersensible" faculty is reason, whose idea of "totality" is neither derived from nor is dependent on nature. Furthermore, the "irresistibility" of [nature's might], "while making us recognize our own [physical] impotence … discloses to us a faculty of judging … entirely different from that which can be attacked and brought into danger by external nature" (101). In short, what Kant calls the human faculty of reason—the source of ideas not grounded in the empirical world and the source of moral freedom—elevates humans above nature and bestows upon them a dignity unknown in nature; ultimately, for Kant, it is our moral personhood, not nature itself, that is sublime.

But when Thoreau experiences the sublime, his response is *not* to "elevate" or "resist" (as he does, by the way, in the face of political power): he *surrenders* to nature: "We can never have enough of Nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and Titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thunder cloud, and the rain which lasts three weeks and produces freshets. We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander" (Thoreau 2004, 306). In Kant's aesthetic paradigm, when the enormous scope and force of nature does "violence" to a person, he or she is thrust upon an interior bedrock or foundation, a moral faculty that stands defiantly against nature. By contrast, Thoreau permits, even revels, in nature's prying open of the self, for our inner continents, he suggests, can become parched, our inner oceans,

stagnant. Like the ship wrecks Thoreau observed on Cape Cod, our vessels, paradoxically, must be dashed on the rocky shores, at least occasionally, in order for new life to flow in, for life, Thoreau proclaims, "consists with wildness" (Thoreau 2013b, 19). Thus if the sublime forces of nature evoke an awful yet strangely satisfying fear in Burke, and elicit a moral defiance in Kant, they refresh and restore Thoreau.

How, then, should we understand the relationship between Thoreau's political attitudes explicated at the beginning of this chapter and the lover of wilderness just expounded. Thoreau's mission, to some extent, is to reclaim human beings for nature. "I wish to speak a word for Nature," he says in the first lines of his essay on *Walking*, "for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with freedom and culture merely civil—to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society" (Thoreau 2013b, 1). Put differently, Thoreau avers that those who view themselves primarily as nature's children belong to a class of "walkers" and "saunterers" and constitute a kind of "fourth estate, outside of Church and State and People" (2). Suffice it to say that any chords of interest or affection that purport to tie such individuals to civil government will be somewhat strained; these "fourth estaters" tend to be mesmerized by nature's beauty—preoccupied with their interior lives, a discovery concomitant to their wilderness sojourns—leaving less energy for civil matters. Therefore, to the degree they are political animals at all, they are wild ones, skittish, easily spooked.

Democratic Individualism

We have already noted Thoreau's sympathy with the abolitionist cause, but among abolitionists there was not a consensus about strategy. For instance, we would do well to remember that it was not just southerners who were tempted to play the secession card but northerners as well. Many abolitionists, like William Lloyd Garrison, were convinced that America's war to annex Texas was being pressed by slaveholders or those who benefited from the slave economy. To Garrison, severing ties with the South would enable New England to extract itself from the evil of what Jefferson termed the "peculiar institution." Furthermore, removing some economic and political support from slaveholders might, he hoped, impede the practice of slavery—even if northern secession would not end the practice altogether. We have already witnessed Thoreau's sympathy with the abolitionist cause and, of course, the same (personal) secessionist-bent.

Ultimately, however, it was the South, specifically the Confederate States, that followed through on the threat to secede. In that event, the arguments for secession were met by counterarguments on behalf of Union—none more cogently and persuasively made than those offered by Lincoln in his First Inaugural Address. The logical consequence of secession, he intoned, is anarchy:

> If a minority, in such a case, will secede rather than acquiesce, they make a precedent which, in turn, will divide and ruin them; for a minority of their own will secede from them, whenever a majority refuses to be controlled by such minority… Plainly, the central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy. A majority, held in restraint by constitutional checks, and limitations, and always changing easily, with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people. Whoever rejects it, does, of necessity, fly to *anarchy or to despotism*. (Lincoln 1992, 200)

While Lincoln's attempt to coax the rebel states back into the Union failed, the rhetoric he deployed in his First Inaugural traded on a Lockean natural rights-social contract tradition that was firmly cemented in the American mind by Jefferson's distillation of it in the Declaration of Independence. After a "long train of abuses and usurpations," Jefferson proclaimed to the world, borrowing language directly from Locke's *Second Treatise*, the Revolutionary generation (still in the living memory of many in Lincoln's audience) had taken up arms against British despotism. And anarchy was equally despised by the Lockean tradition. Though he had posited that humans were rational and had access to the moral compass of natural law that did not, Locke explained, prevent the idyllic (but structurally deficient) state of nature—where each person was his or her own guarantor of liberty—from devolving into a state of war, jeopardizing individuals' precious natural rights. To rescue human freedom and dignity, then, a civil government, resting on the consent of the governed, would have to be established in order to "secure" people's natural rights.

Though one does not know precisely how Thoreau responded to Lincoln's use of the specter of anarchy to discredit secession (Thoreau was alive in 1861, the year the speech was delivered, but would die a year later), one could imagine that the man who said that the best kind of government is one that does not govern "at all" (Thoreau 2013a, 1) or that "any person more right than his neighbor constitutes a majority of one already" (12) would shrug his shoulders—not because he supported slavery or the Confederacy, far from it, but because he was convinced of the

propensity of every government to violate individual conscience and liberty, even a government that happened to be, as was the case with the Union, on the right side of history. In fact, some form of anarchy—not the Hobbesian "war of all against all" but a more pacific vision—was what Thoreau often gestured toward. As we have seen, however, Thoreau did not think the time ripe for such an arrangement; humans lacked the necessary maturity and independence to be entrusted with that responsibility. Thus anarchism was deferred and, what George Kateb calls "democratic individualism," was embraced. And it is to an accounting of that belief that we now turn.

According to Kateb, the "Emersonians"—Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman—believed that the most convincing justification for a democratic society was its promotion of individuality and that a democratic society was the only one in which the pursuit of individuality was open to all, not just the few (Kateb 1992, 96). The meaning of the theory of democratic individuality, he notes, "is that each moral idea [democracy and individuality] needs the other, both to bring out its most brilliant potentialities and to avoid the most sinister ones" (79). Democracy, for instance, by challenging traditional claims of privilege and eroding social hierarchies, creates space for individual development and mobility; furthermore, by continually making individuals aware of the needs of the community and by offering ample opportunities to participate in the alleviation of the community's suffering, democracy can also help to guard against individualism's extremes of isolation and egotism. Still, Kateb admits, since the chief goal of Thoreau and the other Emersonians is the full development of the individual, "they do not find very much in the practice of citizenship which contributes to democratic individuality" (83).

We have already seen how Thoreau felt tainted and trapped by the government's war-making and its direct and indirect support of slavery; he concluded that the more one aligned oneself with the government the more one's moral purity and seriousness would be put at risk. For the most part, then, Thoreau counseled a negative form of justice—a commitment to do no harm: "It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even to the most enormous wrong… If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders" (Thoreau 2013a, 8–9). As for taking up the mantle of political reform, Thoreau suggests that the point of life is less to make the "world

a good place live in" and more to "to *live* in it" (11). All this leads Kateb to conclude that, at best, Thoreau and his ilk will be "distant citizens;" that their willingness to take political action will be "episodic;" that their theory of political action is one that "does not require continuous associative commitment; lends itself to memorable words; is of an educative or consciousness-raising sort" (Kateb 1992, 102–103).

Is it possible that emphasizing Thoreau's commitment to individualism misrepresents his political theory? Bob Pepperman Taylor, as we might infer from our earlier encounter with his work, would answer in the affirmative, and in his book *America's Bachelor Uncle* he provides a forceful argument against an overly individualistic reading of Thoreau. He observes that Thoreau is "by no means an enemy of fraternity and human community" (Taylor 1996, 56). Indeed, Taylor claims, human solidarity is a prominent motif in many of Thoreau's writings, that he busied himself with the question about how "human beings are, or might be, held together in coherent, meaningful, and morally respectable community" (56). In an extended exegesis of Thoreau's work, *Cape Cod*, Taylor argues that Thoreau identifies at least two existential threats that every human community must combat: death's power to extinguish life and to isolate the suffering, and nature's power to erase the memory of individuals and communities (59–60). To parry these attacks, humans have developed the practices of charity and writing history. In his travels to the Cape, however, Thoreau is distressed to find such feeble attempts at both. For instance, the physical manifestations of the community's charity were ramshackle and dilapidated "humane houses" for shipwrecked sailors and lighthouses the government failed to supply with adequate stocks of oil. The lesson Thoreau gleaned from these experiences was that "instead of teaching compassion and fraternity, our charity is radically insufficient, cold, even cruel" (60). Likewise, Thoreau notes that the English historians completely "ignore" the contributions of the French, who settled Nova Scotia shortly before the Pilgrims arrived. From this, Taylor asserts, Thoreau learned that "the history we tell is false, as are the claims to the right of possession that this false history has been used to justify" (62). And finally, to make matters worse, New England society attempted to guarantee solidarity "by building a uniform and intolerant religious community" (65).

Based on his reading of *Cape Cod* and other writings, Taylor urges us to acknowledge that fraternity and human solidarity are *central concerns* of Thoreau—with the caveat that "he [Thoreau] is a critic of the forms that such fraternity and community have taken in America" (Taylor 1996, 56).

Nevertheless, the interpretation that has been offered here, namely, that Thoreau was keen to defend the right of persons to develop their own sense of self—and that he advocated wilderness sojourns and limiting the reach of government to achieve this end—does not necessarily contradict the idea, highlighted by Taylor, that Thoreau *also* sought to forge strong bonds with others and, more broadly, hoped for healthy networks of human relationships. As we noted earlier, Thoreau is not a misanthrope. He asserted in *Walden* that he was "naturally no hermit." But if anything, Thoreau's musings in *Cape Cod* dovetail with the democratic individualism we have attributed to him. The lack of attention and support the public authorities on the Cape gave to the charity houses and lighthouses betrayed the human capacity for compassion; the propagation of the "winners" version of history marginalized minority populations; and the imposition of a uniform religious and moral order violated the liberty of individuals. Similar to the state's propensity to drag individuals into its train of injustice—as discussed in "Civil Disobedience"—the actions of the public authorities Thoreau encountered on the Cape portrayed a warped view of humanity. In short, though Thoreau was no enemy of fraternity, he was aware how difficult it is to establish and was sensitive to the abuses of political power committed in its name.

Like Taylor, Peter Cannavò urges readers to remember that Thoreau also possessed a "communitarian" or republican side (Cannavò 2012, 104). For instance, Cannavò notes that Thoreau sometimes spoke glowingly of farmers meeting together to govern their local affairs and that he exhibited civic spirit by advocating for the arts and adult education in New England towns. And, for purposes of good order, safety, and natural preservation he backed various government regulations (105). Most important, despite his assertion that it is not a person's duty to right the wrongs of society, some of Thoreau's *personal* actions were, by turns, dramatic (being jailed for refusing to pay a poll tax) and courageous (assisting with the underground railroad). Cannavò's examples, then, provide an important corrective, lest we go overboard in pushing Thoreau's individualism.

Nonetheless, Thoreau's support for the arts and some government regulations does not significantly alter the *dominant theme* of individualism and the feeble view of citizenship one encounters in Thoreau's work. As for his incarceration for tax evasion, Bennett asks: "After all, how much did [he] risk? After one night under conditions comparable to those of a bed and breakfast today, a friend paid the tax and had him released" (Bennett 1994, 12). Even his sporadic participation in the Underground

Railroad, as laudable as it may be, is best seen as an *individual act of conscience*; such actions were not going to dismantle the institution of slavery. Achieving that goal would ultimately require highly coordinated and sustained military action in the rebel states, including fighting against confederate armies and the seizing of slaveholders' property. Last, but certainly not least, it would require legislative action. In regard to the latter, Thoreau remarks that, "as for adopting the ways the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life is gone" (Thoreau 2013a, 11). Thoreau is well aware that constitutions can be amended, statutes rescinded; he just does not want to sink time into such efforts. Legislative log-rolling and deal-making are distasteful to Thoreau, and debating and remonstrating with fellow citizens too time consuming.

Without such efforts, however, justice, to take some poetic license with Martin Luther King's saying, is often deferred, if not denied altogether. While Thoreau appears to possess many personal virtues, he is deficient when it comes to many important virtues of citizenship: patience, perseverance, self-sacrifice, and cooperation. Thoreau harshly judged his compatriots for their hypocrisy—that is, for voicing opposition to slavery while continuing to pay their taxes to a government that conspired to, among other things, return runaway slaves. But, in the end, it is Thoreau, the great moralist, who cannot be bothered with the arduous work of "politicking," without which the Thirteenth Amendment, to say nothing of the costly "downstream" efforts to address the vestiges of slavery, would never have materialized.

Thoreau would likely issue a riposte affirming his ardent opposition to slavery but pointing out that social evils eliminated tend, unfortunately, to be replaced by new evils—with those waging a battle against the new injustices demanding, once again, the time and allegiance of people of goodwill. Given this pattern, Thoreau warns that is entirely possible to inhabit a social role, say a political crusader, without ever bothering to become "oneself"—even a self, period. We are finite and, as much as we may want to seek social justice *and* attend to the project of self-formation, we cannot, he believes, honestly devote ourselves (at least not fully) to both. There are unavoidable personal costs either way, Thoreau would insist: without regret, he struck a balance he thought best.

One might be disposed to accept Thoreau's hierarchy of values as the product of a noble, existential decision. Nonetheless, Thoreau's stance becomes even more complicated if we change our field of moral questioning

from slavery to the environment. The problem, stated succinctly, is this: Thoreau rejects a robust view of citizenship in order to safeguard his individuality; however, as we have seen, that individuality is deeply rooted in access to the wild which, already in his day, was being threatened. This threat was the result of "sins" of omission and commission in land policy, and a nascent industrial age's voracious appetite for cheap raw materials. Indeed, Thoreau spoke out about these issues, but, as history has proven, episodic responses to the loss of wilderness are no more effective than episodic responses to slavery. In the face of slavery, he believed he could eschew sustained political action; the question is whether he could consistently do the same in regard to the wild, which was fundamental to his identity. That is, could it be that his political philosophy, his views of citizenship and political commitment, tended to undercut the very actions—state interventions, coordinated legal and legislative responses to environmental degradation—necessary to preserve wilderness, the taproot of his supreme value of individuality. There appears to be a gap in logic and practice that his anti-political, anti-statist philosophy cannot bridge. Stated succinctly, Thoreau's thin theory of citizenship and its anemic account of social action seem inadequate to the task of checking social systems and institutions that degrade persons and wilderness.

This serious weakness, however, should not be allowed to obfuscate the substantial contributions his philosophy makes to our understanding of liberty, the value of nature, and democracy. Taylor laments the "near [scholarly] consensus … that Thoreau is committed to values that prevent him from fully appreciating and understanding the political world, or that he is intellectually or ideologically handicapped in his political thinking" (Taylor 1996, 5). No such dismissal of the value of Thoreau as a political thinker occurs in these pages, even if we have emphasized his individualist-bent. Precisely *because* Thoreau abjured significant social and political ties, because he cultivated his identity as an outsider, he was able to gain a perspective on social and political practices to which those fully immersed in them were often blind. He rightly pointed out that "Statesmen and legislators, standing so completely within the institution, never distinctly and nakedly behold it" (Thoreau 2013a, 24). As we have seen, he had a keen eye for hypocrisy, especially in regard to those who voiced opposition to slavery yet, in subtle and indirect ways, discharged actions that supported it. That is, Thoreau took up the role of prophet and, like most prophets, his insights were the fruit of a radically different spatial orientation: living, exploring, and sojourning in the wilderness, outside

the normal boundaries of society. That he then recorded, redacted, and published these insights that pricked the consciences of his contemporaries and catalyzed action by future political and movement leaders, such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., was a tremendous service to humanity.

In regard to the environmental movement specifically, one of the biggest challenges in our age, when so much human activity is mediated by or dependent upon technology, nature seems remote and, as a consequence, is poorly understood and valued by us. Reading Thoreau is a tonic; it is like being hoisted up a great wall and being allowed to peek over the edge at a vibrant world—teeming with diverse and fascinating life forms, full of beauty and wonder. Oscillating between the sentimental and the unflinchingly realistic, Thoreau's portraits greatly enhance our appreciation for and valuing of nature. Without the writings of "outsiders" like Thoreau, figures who provoke us to re-think our relationship to nature and to reshuffle our priorities, political attempts to protect wilderness will have little traction.

We have seen, then, how the wilderness tradition in America, or at least one of its most distinctive voices, shapes our understanding of democracy. At its best, in Thoreau's estimation, democracy showers liberty on individuals while reining in its own pretentions. Democracy should never be a totalizing discourse; he invites us to see that politics is not something "ultimate" but rather is dependent upon nature, the wilderness, a source of selfhood, inspiration, and vitality beyond itself. Indeed, his writings suggest that an appropriate measure of the health of a given democracy is the degree to which its citizens limit their power and appetites to safeguard a larger frame of life.

And how should we live, we who inhabit democracies? What does Thoreau teach us about citizenship? This essay has hinted that, while Bennett's qualified "postmodern" reading (Bennett 1994) of Thoreau and Taylor's qualified republican reading of Thoreau capture important aspects often lacking in more romantic, individualist interpretations, their portraits tend to occlude some of the best and worst elements in Thoreau's philosophy. In spite of the goals of the postmodern "ethical project"—namely, of giving heterogeneity, the other, the wild its due—one often gets the sense from reading Bennett that Thoreau considers nature primarily as material for self-fashioning, as one of the indispensable technologies of the self. Ironically, such an emphasis contravenes the ethical aim by reducing nature to mere resource or prosthesis. Bennett gives us, one

might say, too much Foucauldian technique and not enough Heideggerian disclosure of Being. And Taylor's work on Thoreau—while an important counter-balance to overly individualistic renderings—deflects too much attention from Thoreau's libertarian-like reticence to advocate sustained (as opposed to occasional) commitments to forge more just communities, to work for a more "perfect union." In place of both, the analysis of this essay establishes Thoreau as a fascinating, if flawed, "wild democrat"—a person who has one foot planted firmly outside of society while he cautiously dangles the other in social and political affairs. He is acutely aware of and boldly calls out instances of social injustice—and may temporarily intervene himself—but his commitment to his own liberty and wildness, to his quest for self-knowledge, leads him to jealously guard his autonomy. In sum, his depiction of nature is stirring, his commitment to self-discovery is admirable, but his theory of citizenship ultimately renders both precarious.

Finally, it should be noted that while Thoreau stands *in* the wilderness tradition, he cannot, by himself, stand *for* it. There were many wilderness advocates who came after Thoreau—including John Muir, Frederick Jackson Turner, Theodore Roosevelt, Owen Wister, and Aldo Leopold. Thus, while his thought may be emblematic of the tradition, it cannot fully capture its complexity (Nash 2001; Lewis 2007). Moreover, if we add advocacy groups to the mix, from the more traditional (e.g. Sierra Club, National Audubon Society or the Nature Conservancy) to the direct action end of the spectrum (e.g. Earth First or Earth Liberation Front), we would have to admit that many wilderness advocates, contrary to Thoreau's instincts, have fully embraced "politicking." Yet even if there are wilderness thinkers and groups whose political sensibilities, methods, and strategies differ from Thoreau's, they would probably *all* agree with a central claim of this book, namely, that the wilderness landscape is a unique space in which humans are reclaimed by nature, realize they are more than political and social beings, and that is precisely why so many people and groups have made efforts to preserve it. Paradoxically, then, the political meaning and value of the wilderness landscape is fundamentally tied to its mostly non-political character—as a space of respite, escape, refreshment, and self-discovery. As another famous wilderness advocate, John Muir, put it: "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity" (Muir 1901). In short, without Walden, life in Concord would be less rich, perhaps less tolerable.

Notes

1. For instance, Thoreau poses two different questions, back-to-back, that elicit very different notions of the relationship between space and personal identity: Is not the "earth we inhabit … but a point in space?" he asks; then, he turns the former notion on its head—"Why should I feel lonely? Is not our planet in the Milky Way?" (129). The geographer David Harvey's taxonomy of space might be helpful in appreciating what Thoreau is up to. Harvey describes three different notions of space. "Absolute space" is "fixed," "independent of matter," is the container in which events occur, and the frame that helps us to map and to "individuate" phenomenon (Harvey 2006, 121). With what Harvey calls "relative space" we give up the idea of a fixed container and think about space as a relationship between objects and foreground the point of reference of the observer; that is, we move from Newton and Descartes to Einstein and non-Euclidian geometries. For example, in relative space "we can create completely different maps of locations by differentiating between distances measured in terms of cost, time and modal split (car, bicycle or skateboard) and even disrupt spatial continuities by looking at networks, topological routes (the optimal route for the postman delivering mail)" (122). Finally, Harvey talks about "relational space," a conception of space in which mathematics and poetry merge, where how a person experiences space—how she represents it to herself—is what is crucial (124). In Thoreau's conflicting interrogatories, then, we meet, at the most general level, "absolute" space, the universe that contains the Milky Way galaxy and its earth. Thoreau also talks about space in "relative" terms. We see this in the poignant phrases "but a point in space" and "in the Milky Way." And, from the standpoint of "relational" space, Thoreau uses these phrases to describe two possible experiences: *existential abandonment*—whether dwelling in the wilderness or in a village, are not all people, he seems to ask, alone in a vast and silent universe?—and, more frequently felt by him, *a warm sense of communion* with the celestial bodies.
2. When a representation of an object excites the observer's cognitive powers, again, not by being subsumed under a concept but by catalyzing "play" between the imagination and the human faculty of understanding, we judge that object to be beautiful (Kant 1951, 58).

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PART II

Rival Democratic Designs

CHAPTER 4

Olmsted's Public Parks: Civic-Spirited Design

Frederick Law Olmsted, the vaunted American landscape architect and planner, was fond of explaining how prime tracts of land—areas universally recognized for, among reasons, their aesthetic qualities—were originally the property of the most powerful and affluent families of Europe, their beloved "pleasure" or "kept" grounds, before they became fashionable public parks (Olmsted 1997d, 308). That these spaces, once aristocratic estates or royal hunting grounds, were now the preserve of commoners was a tangible and potent symbol of political change, a remarkable physical manifestation of the cultural shift toward democracy, a shift inspired at least in part by the Revolutionary War fought in Olmsted's America. Olmsted was, however, interested in much more than the movement to build public parks. As a keen observer of nineteenth-century American life—pace his travelogues and social criticism describing such disparate places as the antebellum South and the post-war Western frontier—Olmsted identified and wrote eloquently about many of the serious challenges the young republic faced, including the need to assimilate waves of immigrants and to address the economic and social dislocation associated with rapid industrialization. The key question for him was whether the democratic experiment launched in America could be sustained over time, whether America would prove to be resilient in the midst of social change. Olmsted believed that America's success in this endeavor would hinge on the effectiveness of a multitude of civic institutions and on good governance and planning at the local and national levels. But he was especially

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eager to demonstrate the contribution that creative and thoughtful urban design could make to democratic capacity building.

Perhaps one of the most incisive descriptions of Frederick Law Olmsted's genius comes from his contemporary, Charles Eliot Norton, who observed that, among American artists, Olmsted ranks "first in the production of great works which answer the needs and give expression to the life of our immense and miscellaneous democracy" (Mumford 1971, 40). This chapter will attempt to unpack Norton's complimentary description, to explain what democratic needs Olmsted identified and how—sometimes in words, sometimes in the artful arrangement of soil, rock and vegetation—he expressed the diverse character of the American democratic tradition. Given the complexity of both theme and artist, we will encounter, to borrow phraseology from the realm of music, a number of "variations"—different answers to the question of democratic needs and disparate physical embodiments of democratic ideals.

Specifically, Olmsted blends at least three different visions of democracy in his designs and essays. First, Olmsted believes that in a democratic society people, regardless of socioeconomic standing, should sense that they belong to a community, and he attempts to create civic spaces where this feeling of fraternity can be nurtured. Second, Olmsted links democracy to an even broader concept, that of "civilization." If his thoughts about democratic community emphasize *integration* and belonging, his treatment of civilization highlights the need for individual *transformation* or character formation, a process that involves not only political and social institutions but also the world of nature, especially when enhanced by human design. Third, the aforementioned republican features of Olmsted's thought—which emphasize democratic solidarity and virtue acquisition—rest on a classically liberal commitment to individual liberty. Whereas the republican elements get top billing, Olmsted's corresponding liberalism should not be overlooked; both are woven into his art and thinking—each strand answering different needs but together reflecting that grand "miscellany" of American democracy.

Finally, our purpose is not merely to interpret Olmsted's thought but to highlight its value for framing and thinking about the relationship between the built environment and democracy in our contemporary setting. This will entail a process of critically sifting through Olmsted's claims about the democratic potential of urban design. Olmsted, it will be argued, exaggerated the moral efficacy of landscape architecture but not some of its other civic benefits. Taken as a whole, it is hard to deny that Olmsted's

tireless efforts to preserve national treasures for posterity and to create beautiful and accessible public parks have enriched our democratic landscape—a landscape constantly threatened by excessive privatization and social isolation.

Fraternity

In *Frederick Law Olmsted: The Passion of a Public Artist*, historian Melvin Kalfus adroitly depicts some of Olmsted's contemporaries' attitudes toward American society in the Gilded Age. Men like Charles Norton, Washington Irving, and Henry Adams, to name a few, decried the rampant materialism and individualism of their day and yearned for the moral clarity and civic spirit of the early Republic (Kalfus 1990, 15–16). In a letter to a colleague, Norton bemoaned that "[m]en in cities and towns feel much less relation with their neighbors than of old; there is much less civic patriotism; less sense of a spiritual and moral community" (273). One practical response to this perceived communal deficit was to create physical spaces where people of varied backgrounds could gather and interact with one another.

Andrew Downing, the leading landscape gardener of the mid-nineteenth century, urged his fellow landscape designers to apply their craft to nurture a "more fraternal spirit in our social life" (Kalfus 1990, 278–279). To translate this conviction into reality, Downing, in a series of letters dating from 1849 and 1850, argued for the "necessity of a great Park" for New York City (Blackmar and Rosenzweig 1992, 15). Interestingly, as part of his campaign for a stately park in Manhattan, Downing's *Horticulturalist* published Olmsted's first essay—an article in which Olmsted describes his visit to Birkenhead Park in Liverpool, England. That Birkenhead was a publicly built and financed park (as opposed to being a former aristocratic estate) impressed Olmsted greatly, as did its fostering of inter-class association. "I was glad to observe," Olmsted writes, "that the privileges of the garden were enjoyed about equally by all classes" (Rybczynski 2003, 93). There was, then, a strong intellectual affinity between Olmsted and Downing, and they seemed to share a common social vision. After Downing met an untimely death in a steamboat accident, implementation of this vision was left to Olmsted, among others.

That the promotion of fraternal spirit through landscape design is an important Olmstedian theme can be seen in his essay titled "Public Parks

and the Enlargement of Towns." Recreation, explains Olmsted, can take two forms: exertive and receptive. Under the first heading, the exertive, one would find "[g]ames chiefly of mental skill, [such] as chess" and "athletic sports" (Olmsted 1997e, 184). By contrast, receptive types of recreation "cause us to receive pleasure or benefit without conscious exertion" (184). The receptive can be further subdivided based on the size of the group pursuing the activity. Olmsted contends that the desire to interact with "large congregation[s] of persons" is "dependent upon the existence of an instinct in us of which I think not enough account is commonly made," namely, the "gregarious class of social receptive recreation" (185). In Olmsted's own experience, the "most complete gratification of this instinct" was on the promenade of the Champs Elysees in Paris or "upon the New York Parks" (185). Indeed, this instinctual need to assemble and mingle in large groups was specifically addressed by Olmsted's plans for New York's Central and Brooklyn's Prospect Park. An outstanding example of a park element designed to satisfy the gregarious instinct is the Mall in Central Park. Extending from 66th to 72nd Streets, the 40-foot-wide promenade, lined with American elms, was built to provide a place for New Yorkers to socialize. As Charles Beveridge notes, areas dedicated to the use of large groups, like the Mall, had to be carefully designed to minimize damage and to avoid interference with the "more solitary enjoyment of natural scenery," such as are afforded by the many secluded paths that cover the grounds of Central Park. In terms of arrangement, however, the Mall's placement—at the center of the park—is an aberration. More commonly, according to Beveridge, Olmsted sought to place these kinds of facilities on the periphery, as in Prospect Park's "Concert Grove" or Franklin Park's "Greeting" (Beveridge and Rocheleau 1995, 50).

In an oft-quoted passage, Olmsted describes, with manifest satisfaction, the way in which his landscape designs facilitated social togetherness:

> Consider that the New York and Brooklyn Park are the only places in those associated cities where, in this eighteen hundred and seventieth year after Christ, you will find a body of Christians coming together, and with an evident glee in the prospect of coming together, all classes largely represented, with a common purpose, not all intellectual, competitive with none, disposing to jealousy and spiritual or intellectual pride toward none, each individual adding by his mere presence to the pleasure of all others, all helping to the greater happiness of each. You may thus often see vast numbers of persons brought closely together, poor and rich, young and old, Jew and

> Gentile … I have looked studiously but vainly among them for a single face completely unsympathetic with the prevailing expression of good nature and light-heartedness. (Olmsted 1997e, 186)

What Olmsted captures in this excerpt—the simple joy of human togetherness that can be experienced by a large group of people that is at once marked by its diversity and its common fate—is an aspect of democratic life that is mostly absent in our contemporary discussions of democratic institutions and processes. To find another statement about the delights of democratic togetherness that rivals Olmsted's in eloquence, one would probably have to turn to the writings of Rousseau, where he eulogizes democratic togetherness—accomplished through recreations like feasting, games, and militia drilling.

In Olmsted's plans for smaller venues, physical spaces more hospitable to a modest compass of human relations—such as the gathering of family and close friends—social intercourse would be more intimate, would facilitate what he calls "neighborly" as opposed to gregarious receptive recreation:

> [Such] circumstances are all favorable to a pleasurable wakefulness of the mind without stimulating exertion; and the close relation of family life, the association of children, of mothers, of lovers, of those who may be lovers, stimulate and keep alive the more tender sympathies, and give play to faculties such as may be dormant in business or [even] on the promenade; while at the same time the cares of providing in detail for all the wants of the family, guidance, instruction, and reproof, are, as matters of conscious exertion, as far as possible laid aside. (Olmsted 1997e, 186–187)

Thus Olmstead's plan for Prospect Park, for instance, envisioned ample opportunity for "several thousand little family and neighborly parties to bivouac at frequent intervals throughout the summer, without discommoding one another" (188).

Whether a particular design element was meant to nurture the neighborly or the gregarious form of receptive recreation, the togetherness of family and friends or of a larger body of citizens, the promotion of civic brotherhood loomed large in Olmsted's moral vocabulary. In *The Idea of Fraternity in America*, Wilson Carey McWilliams attributes Olmsted's "crusade for parks and recreation areas" to the latter's hope that "citizens might be able to overcome isolation and suspicion" (McWilliams 1974,

475). The idea of fraternity, as McWilliams concedes, is rather ambiguous. Its dictionary definition "proceeds like a rudderless ship, in ever widening circularity"—though that does not prevent McWilliams from offering his own definition, which includes the notions of bonds "based on intense interpersonal affection" and shared values and goals "considered more important than 'mere life'" (2, 7).

At this juncture, we can pause to consider briefly whether Olmsted's commitment to designing urban spaces that nurture fraternity is evident in our current built environment. In a later chapter, we will examine a contemporary design movement, New Urbanism, which shares many of Olmsted's values, even if, like Olmsted's spaces, new urbanist developments do not fully deliver on their promises. Both Olmsted and the new urbanist philosophy resist a strong ethos of privacy; nevertheless, current development trends favor privacy. In the next few pages, we will consider the ramifications for our democratic culture when we turn away from Olmsted's vision, when our commitment to preserving and building public spaces is overwhelmed by a rush to privatize. Some of the consequences include loss of free speech rights, lack of citizen interaction and mutual understanding and the loss of self-government rights.

In her book, *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space*, Margaret Kohn describes how traditional public spaces such as downtowns have been increasingly replaced by privately owned "simulacra"—megamalls and shopping centers (Kohn 2004, 74). Among other consequences of the "mauling" of America, as she describes the phenomenon, is the chilling effect it has had on political speech. To illustrate her point, Kohn examines a series of Supreme Court cases, from 1946 to 1980, that address the scope of citizens' First Amendment rights in quasi-public spaces. In *Marsh v. Alabama* (1946), a Jehovah's witness, Grace Marsh, was arrested and found guilty of trespassing on private property when she attempted to distribute religious leaflets in Chickasaw, a town owned by the Gulf Shipbuilding Corporation. The Court overturned Marsh's conviction, noting that Chickasaw, despite being privately owned, performed all the functions of a normal municipality. Kohn observes that the *Marsh* Court emphasized that private property rights are not absolute but must be balanced against other important state interests. Justice Black, for instance, explained that the free flow of ideas is indispensable to a democratic society (71). Twenty-six years later, however, in *Lloyd Corp v. Tanner* (1972), the Supreme Court, when confronted with a similar question—this time involving the distribution of handbills on the premises of

a private shopping mall—sided with the mall owners, announcing that they could prohibit such activity, even if it did not directly interfere with the mall's commercial purposes (72). In his majority opinion, Justice Powell distinguished the mall from the company town, saying the former did not perform municipal functions and was not a space in which individuals pursued multiple activities. Gone, Kohn writes, was the doctrine of the "invitee"—in which private property owners open themselves to greater regulation when they grant the general public access—since the invitation, according to Justice Powell, was clearly "to shop" and *not* to engage in other activities associated with being in public spaces. Absent too, Kohn laments, was any "idealistic discussion of the free exchange of ideas necessary to maintain an informed citizenry (72).

Subsequent First Amendment attempts to metaphorically break the glass and steel enclosures of private malls failed. Arguments detailing state action—pointing out state support in the form of enforcing criminal trespass and in massive subsidies for private development—were all turned aside (Kohn 2004, 72–73). In *Pruneyard Shopping Center v. Robins* (1980), the Court did say that, although direct First Amendment challenges to restrictions on speech in malls were of no avail, federal and state legislation could permissibly regulate access; that, of course, would put the onus on free speech proponents to convince those legislative bodies to do so (74).

At the turn of the twenty-first century, Kohn observes, there are 23 square feet of shopping mall space for every person in America (75) and, in an attempt to compete with suburban shopping malls, urban downtowns are also creating their own private governments, "Business Improvement Districts," to offer "managed" spaces similar to malls. According to Kohn, one can only appreciate how distressing these trends are by appreciating how America's use of space has changed: "The technology of the automobile, the expansion of federal highway system, and the growth of residential suburbs has changed the way Americans live. Today the only place that many Americans encounter strangers is in the shopping mall. The most important public place is now private" (70).

Underlying this privatization of public space, Kohn argues, is Americans' "discomfort" with face-to-face interaction, despite our public commitment to the principle of free speech. As public space recedes, however, personal encounters between different kinds of people become rarer. But face-to-face political debate, Kohn insists, is important precisely because it cannot be filtered like Facebook; instead, in-person political debate "allows

citizens to ask questions and challenge answers" where it is harder to be ignored (Kohn 2004, 4). Finally, she claims, the segregation of race and class that often accompanies the loss of public space skews political decision-making, for "segregation itself makes it difficult for members of privileged groups to recognize the existence of injustice. It makes the reality of deprivation invisible to those who do not live in zones of danger" (8).

Another traditional public space that is becoming increasingly privatized is the neighborhood. Evan McKenzie chronicles the proliferation of common interest developments (CIDS), which, he explains, are a form of private housing that can include condominiums, cooperative apartments, and single-family houses in planned-unit developments (PUDS) (McKenzie 1994, 7). While CIDS residents "own or exclusively occupy their own units," they also "share ownership of the 'common area' of the development" (19). Other legal characteristics that distinguish CIDS are a mandatory requirement to join the homeowner association and to comply with its charter of covenants, contracts, and deed restrictions (CC&Rs) (McKenzie 1994). The central goal of these developments is the preservation of property values; additionally, especially for those CIDS that include gates or other types of fortification, such communities promise to provide security for persons as well as their property.

McKenzie and other social scientists have raised concerns about CIDS, questioning whether the democratic freedoms afforded to citizens are undermined by the oligarchic powers of the homeowner associations under which many of them live. Indeed, after rehearsing many of the powers of homeowner associations—the power to buy and sell property, to regulate (in the minutest detail) the use and decoration of property, to impose fines and attach liens (with scant due process), to proscribe certain (otherwise lawful) behaviors of residents and visitors—McKenzie concludes that we have created a "peculiarly American form of private government in which the rights of the people, and public government is left as a bystander" (McKenzie 1994, 148).

This micropolitics of excessive private control and regulation of residential developments, however, does not exhaust democratic critique of CIDS. What we learn from Olmsted is that one of the aims of democracy is to promote fraternity—a spirit of civic community. Yet, it is difficult to overcome isolation and suspicion on a landscape dotted with CIDS whose effect, if not intentional design, is to impede civic commerce. For instance, these CIDS are increasingly gated enclaves. Anthropologist Setha Low observes that "gated communities restrict access not just to residents'

homes, but also the use of public spaces and services—roads, parks, facilities, and open space—contained within the enclosure" (Low 2003, 12). Thus instead of Olmstedian spaces—democratically measured spaces, where as he describes them, people from all walks of life come together—Low encounters something more like medieval feudalism, where people seek "haven[s] in a socially and culturally diverse world," where "desire for safety, security, community and 'niceness' as well as wanting to live near people like themselves because of a fear of 'otherness' and crimes," leads the residents she interviewed to seek shelter behind a barricade (9–10).

We need to keep in mind, however, that the foregoing critique of our contemporary balkanized landscape, where public space has become privatized, limiting social intercourse, presumes that urban public spaces, Olmsted's included, can *actually* foster public-spiritedness. In fact, this premise—what social scientists refer to as the "contact" theory or hypothesis—is controversial. In an essay titled "Binding Problems, Boundary Problems: The Trouble with Democratic Citizenship," Clarissa Rile Hayward assesses the work of contemporary political theorists who focus attention on urban public spaces and their purported ability to facilitate a level of civic mindedness that can yield "public-regarding political engagement" (Hayward 2007, 181). Like Olmsted's parks, these spaces (streets, sidewalks, plazas) are rarely the locus of *explicit* deliberation and dialog about the common good; instead, in the words of Gerald Frug, these spaces promote "community building—where 'community' signals not identity understood as sameness or commonality, but the capacity to coexist peacefully and to 'collaborate' politically with 'strangers who share only the fact that they live in the same geographic area'" (194). Hayward, however, characterizes the notion that increased social contact will change beliefs and perceptions and foster social solidarity as "naïve" (197). Citing social psychological research, Hayward notes that increased social contact can catalyze a reduction of intergroup bias and conflict, but *only* under the most demanding conditions—that is, where strangers "enjoy equal status" or where the "potential for becoming acquaintances is high"—conditions, she argues, that *do not* exist in most urban settings (196). Nonetheless, Margaret Kohn points out that some studies of the contact hypothesis have yielded more sanguine results (Sigelman and Welch 1993; Oliver and Wong 2003), even in the absence of conditions like shared goals or support from authorities (Pettigrew 1998; Kohn 2011). Still, the conflicting results lead Kohn, like Hayward, to believe that mere exposure to diversity is insufficient.

Not eschewing the democratic goal of social solidarity, Kohn looks to the reforming generation that *followed* Olmsted's, that is, to the Progressives, for more promising models. In contrast to a strategy like Olmsted's, which relied upon occasional encounters in a park setting, Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago ensured that neighborhood residents had frequent and sustained contact, engaged in discussions, and participated in common activities. Indeed, Settlement houses like Hull offered a variety of services, including day care, adult education, gymnasia, and bathhouses, to name a few (Addams 2002). Kohn argues that Addams' strategy differed from Olmsted's in at least two important respects: "First, there was more emphasis on self-organization, mobilization, and empowerment of the disenfranchised. Second, the benefits of class mixing were understood to extend to the elite, as well as the poor" (Kohn 2011, 93). That is, Hull House was not so much a charitable as a social center—a place where residents conducted research on their own communities and engaged in political advocacy and where learning went "both ways," with middle class members of the community learning about the immigrant communities in which they were embedded (91–93). Whereas Olmsted's parks relied on "copresence" and "the visual tableau of the democratic public" (85), says Kohn, the program of the Progressives (Addams, Zublin, Howe, Dewey) emphasized "stable, face-to-face community within the broader urban fabric" (86), on "recreation and play rather than the aesthetic pleasure of pastoral scenery" (88).

While Kohn believes Olmsted's agenda needs to be supplemented by the richer networks of interaction offered by the Progressive's strategy, she still applauds his commitment to creating public spaces and for attempting to facilitate social interaction. So where does this leave us? At the very least, the critiques leveled above would seem to undercut a "strong" Olmstedian version of fraternity promoted by his parks, one that could reliably motivate citizens to act in concert to achieve common goals or could significantly promote understanding among various groups. One could argue, however, that Olmsted actually had in mind a "weaker" version of fraternity. Recall that Olmsted speaks of neighborliness and gregariousness as social "instincts" or sentiments. Olmsted believes these are "given" or part of the human endowment. The primary issue, then, is whether these instincts can be expressed or satisfied, a satisfaction highly dependent on physical space: the city can either accommodate these instincts (through public design) or neglect them. Whether designing space for the expression of neighborly and gregarious sentiments will

actually help build civic capacity is, as we have seen, uncertain. But Olmsted does not appear merely to view these sentiments *instrumentally*, as essential props to democracy, but rather *diagnostically*. That is, the recognition of the existence of these social sentiments and a corresponding commitment to satisfying them is, Olmsted implies, one *measure* we can use to assess whether a democracy, a regime form dedicated to the protection and flourishing of each and every citizen, is achieving its mission. Finally, while Olmsted may have indulged in some unfounded optimism about the power of his parks to strengthen social bonds, Addams' program of class mixing—as compelling as it might be—*also* relies on fairly large helpings of idealism, the willingness of large numbers of middle class people to take up residence in impoverished communities.

Civilizing Spaces: The American Frontier and Urban Parks

Fraternity, the concept we just considered, is a hallmark of republican political theory. And within republicanism it is commonly associated with another concept, namely, virtue (Bailyn 1980; Wood 1993). Republicanism, therefore, posits not a simple brotherhood but a brotherhood of virtue. According to historian Gordon Wood, the notion that people should acquire the virtue of self-sacrifice, that they should place the good of the whole community above private interests "formed the essence of republicanism and comprehended for Americans the idealistic goal of their Revolution" (Wood 1993, 53). Of course republicanism did not vanish after the Revolutionary generation; Olmsted, as we will see, adapted these ideas to his own circumstances. Fostering social solidarity—fraternity—is a key value for Olmsted, but it shares pride of place with the cultivation of civic virtue. It is fair to say that the political tradition of republicanism, embracing the notion of fraternity and emphasizing the importance of civic virtue, informs Olmsted's mental and physical landscapes.

In Olmsted's work, however, the associated republican oppositions of virtue and vice (or corruption) are transformed into a new binary: civilization and barbarism. These terms form the backbone of Olmsted's social theory, which, arguably, is best articulated in a series of notes discussing living conditions on the American frontier and in pioneer settlements. Olmstead intended to use these notes to pen a monograph (never completed) that would describe and assess the civilizing and decivilizing currents associated with frontier life. Against this backdrop, Olmsted's

writings on parks can be understood as an implicit *urban* theory of social development—a compliment to his reflections on the pioneer condition's role in helping people acquire the habits and practices of civilization.

If Olmsted thought parks, among a host of other social institutions, could contribute to the process of civilization, it begs the question: What, exactly, does Olmsted mean when he employs the term "civilization"? Olmsted defines civilization as a condition "in which every individual on the whole during his life is of service to and is served by every other therein, in which consequently all the intelligence and other forces of those who constitute them are employed with the least waste and to the highest ends" (Olmsted 1990a, 725). Under this definition, one extraordinarily cultivated person a civilization does not make. Neither are limited partnerships for various social, cultural or economic ends the primary object. Instead, civilization is about building a social system of efficient exchange of individuals' gifts, talents, and creative abilities—and the goods and services these human resources supply. Put differently, it is a dynamic pooling and sharing of human talent in which the whole transcends the parts and, thereby, creates something stable and resilient that can be passed down from one generation to the next.

As Olmsted sees it, for a civilization to be built and to endure sacrifices will have to be made and human skills will have to be developed, for "the cloud which rests on all civilized communities comes from the fact that while each man's demands upon others increase and become imperative, his will and ability to supply wants of others does not correspondingly advance" (735). According to Olmsted, the way to chase this dark cloud away is to *either* "cut down the measure of wants to the measure of service"—the motif of individual "sacrifice" and delayed gratification—*or* "to enlarge the measure of service to the measure of wants," that is, to educate and improve people, to develop new technologies and the means of delivering services (735). As is often the case, the "either/or" choice of solutions is a rhetorical device; *both* chastened desire and cultural development are needed, as Olmsted's *Notes* make clear.

Much like Frederick Jackson Turner (1996), Olmsted also provides a theoretical account of the stages of "change in the character and habits of Men" which unfold as Americans evolve to a more civilized state (Olmsted 1990a, 724). For our purposes it will suffice to establish the basic logic of his model: it appears that, as individuals pass through the various stages, they (a) gain increasing control over their appetites, become more autonomous, and (b) expand the scope of their moral community, those with

whom they identify and to whom they owe duties. Compared to contemporary philosophical and psychological models of personality and moral development—for example, those proposed by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg—Olmsted's account is somewhat vague and lacking in conceptual clarity (Crain 2000).[1] Nonetheless, to Olmsted's credit, his theory demonstrates a keen awareness of the phenomenon of moral-civilizational development. And we must remember that it was not intended, buried as it is in his observations of pioneer life, to be a social science paradigm supported by mounds of empirical data or a philosophical theory resting firmly on rigorous, logical analysis.

Rather, Olmsted's pressing concern, shared by many of his intellectual contemporaries, was the United States' prospects for continued vigor and resilience given its immigrant character. Horace Bushnell, Olmsted suggested, had put the problem succinctly: "A new settlement of the social state involves a tendency to social decline: there must in every such case be a relapse toward barbarism more or less protracted, more or less complete. We are a people trying out the perils incident to a new settlement of the social state" (Olmsted 1990a, 691). The reasons for "social decline" and a "relapse toward barbarism," as Olmsted tracks them, were numerous.

According to Olmsted, from the very beginning, American immigrants embark on a journey from which only the most fortunate and morally upright can arrive uncorrupted. On board ship,

> … the strong, the cunning, the sly and selfish rule over and spoil the weak, the sick, the simple with only so much regard for future consequences as is necessary to make falsehood, perjury, and the practice of all sorts of deceit and subterfuge and petty swindling and tyranny so common that after the voyage of ordinary length few emigrants have not been taught by severe lessons to consider that when among strangers 'every man must take care of himself,' 'all advice must be regarded with suspicion,' 'a man must wear a bold face,' that 'if he waits for constables and courts to protect him, he will soon not have a rag to his back'. (682–683)

Once he makes landfall, explains Olmsted, it is out of the proverbial frying pan and into the fire, for the immigrant will most likely find work and lodging among people of his same class, precisely those who have been schooled in the immoral atmosphere of the ship's hull and tenement slum.

For those immigrants who continued to push westward, especially for the advanced guard, there was perpetual conflict. This "warfare of the

pioneer," states Olmsted, has been going on since Europeans arrived in North America: "There is not a night in which at some point blood does not flow now, and there probably never has been one" (Olmsted 1990a, 705). Histrionics aside, Olmsted's point is simple: the pioneer condition was rough and violent. Beyond their taste for pugilism and blood sport, a less remarkable, yet for Olmsted more serious fault was what he referred to as immigrants' "short sighted, self-regard" (706). That is, one of the chief ways these pioneers revealed their lack of moral progress was in their failure to regulate their appetites and desires. Recall that a key virtue or indicator of civilized behavior for Olmsted is the practice of delayed gratification. As a result of their intemperance, valuable resources are squandered and a steady supply of basic necessities, the precondition of any civilized life, is jeopardized. Olmsted explains that this improvidence is behind the actions of the "savage and barbarous white hunter of the plains [who] gorge[s] himself with buffalo hump this month without a thought of providing a store for the next, and the great mining corporations of Nevada to clutch by the shortest and readiest method forty percent of the silver contained in the rock they have taken from their mines, letting the remaining 60 percent go beyond recovery. [And it is the same] phenomenon of vicious economy and blundering selfishness which made the poor whites of the South the friends of slavery" (707).

That buffalo hunters and miners sometimes lack impulse control or that it takes a "blundering" degree of selfishness to enslave another human being are legitimate observations. Nevertheless, Olmsted's broader implication—namely, that immigrants as a class of people are generally less willing to defer gratification and make the kinds of sacrifices necessary to build civilization—is controversial. Here we must object that Olmsted paints with too broad a brush. Contrary to what Olmsted implies, do not immigrants make significant sacrifices by uprooting their families and starting over in a new place? Might not the plight of immigrants be paradigmatic of deferred gratification—the drama of a people willing to scale a mountain of inconveniences and difficulties for the sake of a better life? The most that can be said is that Olmsted does not give up on them, for operating right alongside the forces of barbarism, he witnesses a host of civilizing forces—influences he believed would, in the long run, prove more beneficial to the cause of civilization than anything similar the class-based society of the Old World could provide.

These salubrious factors of the American "pioneer condition" can be grouped into various categories, like voluntary associations, family life,

property ownership, free enterprise, and civic life. Viewed as a package, these institutions and social practices augured well for the prospects of a nascent civilization on the American frontier. But what about the multitudes that did not make the journey West? Those who found themselves crowded into urban centers? Arguably, the immigrant urban dweller, no less than the immigrant pioneer, was in desperate need of a regimen of character formation.

Even if his sociological analysis of the frontier was more fully elaborated, Olmsted posed the "civilization question" in regard to urban spaces as well. Mirroring the character-deforming aspects of the frontier elucidated above, Olmsted speaks frankly about the mean streets of the city: "[M]en who have been brought up … in the streets, who have been the most directly and completely affected by town influences … show, along with a remarkable quickness of apprehension, a peculiarly hard sort of selfishness. Every day of their lives they have seen thousands of their fellow-men, have met them face-to-face, have brushed against them, and yet have had no experience of anything in common with them" (Olmsted 1997e, 180). Or, again "consider how often you see young men in knots of perhaps half a dozen in lounging attitudes rudely obstructing the sidewalks, chiefly led in their little conversation by the suggestions given to their minds by what or whom they may see passing in the street, [people for whom] they have no respect or sympathy. There is nothing among them or about them which is adapted to bring into play a spark of admiration, of delicacy, manliness, or tenderness" (187).

The urban magnet, attracting people with the promise of economic opportunity, often cloaked a cesspool of industrial ills; Olmsted was keenly aware that the great cities of the mid and late nineteenth century provided more than their fair share of opportunities for mischief and dissolution, and it led him to doubt "which of two slants toward the savage condition is most to be deplored and to be struggled with, that which we see in the dense, poor quarters of our great cities … [or in] the more sterile regions of the great West" (Beveridge and Rocheleau 1995, 116). Thus, Olmsted surmises, if the pioneer had to be coaxed out of his anti-social individuation into a social settlement, the corresponding problem of the city dweller was to call him out of the unseemly crowd or mass and turn him into a person capable of democratic citizenship—of consciously fulfilling his duties to humanity.

Beyond his writings on parks, Olmsted does not supply a detailed account of the urban institutions that exercised an important moral

influence, though such an account would be relatively easy to imagine. In the cities, as on the prairie, there were a plethora of voluntary associations, religious institutions, political parties, and private enterprise. That most of humanity would, in the future, live in cities, Olmsted was certain—hence the utter seriousness with which he approached the task of designing urban spaces that would promote the virtues of civilized behavior. "[T]he further progress of civilization," he propounds, "is to depend mainly upon the influences by which men's minds and characters will be affected while living in large towns" (Olmsted 1997e, 179).

In assessing the validity of the claims Olmsted makes on behalf of parks and other designed urban spaces, we will need to untangle two separate propositions. As noted in the quotations above, Olmsted bemoans the lack of civility and moral culture in cities—seeing, instead, people who are "selfish," "rude" and bereft of "respect or sympathy." Olmsted seems to believe that, just as the landscape artist grooms and sculpts an overgrown piece of property into something beautiful, these lovely parks will, in turn, have a "harmonizing and refining influence [on park visitors] … favorable to courtesy, self-control and temperance" (Hall 2002, 46). This claim about the moral efficacy of beautiful landscapes, however, is highly implausible. On the moral benefit of landscape architecture, Olmsted never moves from assertion to demonstration.

The more plausible claim Olmsted makes about the civilizational benefits that his "pleasure grounds" can bestow is this: much as natural resources are depleted or machinery worn out in the process of production, industrial workers (and their white collar counterparts) are exhausted by their labor (and, importantly, by their working and living environments); thus, in order for Olmsted's great exchange of civilization to continue, human beings need to be re-constituted—landscape beauty playing a key role in this process of restoration. There is no denying the economic advantages that have accrued from the growth of towns and the expansion of commerce, but there is also no denying, Olmsted proposes, the "grave drawbacks" of this state of affairs: "We may yet understand them so imperfectly that we but little more than veil our ignorance when we talk of what is lost and suffered under the name of "vital exhaustion," "nervous irritation," and "constitutional depression" (Olmsted 1997a, 345).

How can we remedy these modern urban maladies of exhaustion and depression? A proverbial walk in the park may not be a cure-all, but its medicinal qualities, claims Olmsted, should not be overlooked. "It is one great purpose of [Central Park]," he announces, "to supply to the hundreds

of thousands of tired workers, who have no opportunity to spend their summers in the country, a specimen of God's handiwork that shall be to them, inexpensively, what a month or two in the White Mountains or the Adirondacks is, at great cost, to those in easier circumstances" (Rybczynski 2003, 177). Whereas the wealthy of New York City could "summer" out in the Hamptons or in the mountain resorts, and thus gain refreshment, the great Park would have to serve that function for the vast majority who could not afford to travel to such inspiring natural landscapes. "Thus it must be that parks are beyond anything else recreative of that which is most apt to be lost or to become diseased and debilitated among the dwellers in towns" (Olmsted 1997b, 152). Commenting on Olmsted's faith in the curative powers of natural beauty, Olmsted biographer Witold Rybczynski observes that "[w]hen he discussed the recuperative power of natural scenery, he literally meant healing. He believed that the contemplation of nature, fresh air, and the change of everyday habits improved people's health and intellectual vigor" (Rybczynski 258). Thoreau, as we have seen, would heartily concur.

In addition to the exhaustion of the daily routine—factory toil, followed by the long march against the current of one's fellow-downtrodden to make it home to a cold, dank tenement—there was a further psychological malaise that attended modern life, and it was especially acute among the business or professional classes, for whom intellectual labor was the norm. Olmsted, discussing the desirable psychological effects of well-designed parks, explains that "a combination of elements [should be included] which shall invite and stimulate the simplest, purest and most primeval action of the poetic element of human nature, and thus tend to remove those who are affected by it to the greatest possible distance from the highly elaborate, sophistical and artificial conditions of their ordinary civilized life" (Olmsted 1997b, 152). In his use of the term "elaborate" in juxtaposition to the "poetic element in human nature," Olmsted seems to be referencing the divide between *reason*—its penchant for dividing (and then categorizing) the world into very distinct conceptual pieces, the process of "elaboration" and articulation—and *feeling*, a theme common among romantic poets, philosophers, and social critics. More than a Faustian inner-division of the soul, a tug-of-war between one's reasons and passions, the deeper implication of Olmsted's narrative, evidenced by his claim that natural scenery must awaken ("invite and stimulate") the affective (or "poetic") capacities, is that the latter has been buried, undernourished—if not repressed altogether. The therapy of natural scenery,

Olmsted hopes, will create psychological clearings or openings, induced by the aesthetic design and physical topography of his parks, where feelings can be acknowledged and gladly embraced.

Olmsted leaves little doubt that civilization's efficient exchange of services will cut a distorted figure unless the humans who embody that civilization lead lives of "integrity," lives in which reason and feeling are harmoniously intertwined. Intriguingly, in the past several years, a growing body of scientific literature, while expressed in an entirely different idiom than Olmsted's, provides strong empirical support for his claim that spending time "connecting" with nature has a number of positive psychological (not to mention physical) health benefits (Louv 2005; Wells 2000). In sum, whereas the purported moral benefits of parks—their ability to instill the virtues of self-control and temperance—are suspect, Olmsted's belief that his designs would have a recuperative or psychological benefit are more persuasive.

As we reflect again on the relevance of Olmsted's work, we see that there is more than his concern about fraternity that helps to anchor criticisms of our contemporary urban environments. To rehearse the argument: Olmsted believes that democracy, as a regime form, is the best vehicle of civilization; civilization, in turn, requires a steady flow of citizens who are physically and psychologically fortified, so that the development of their unique talents can benefit the community at large. As we have observed, Olmsted worried that the urban setting of his day, instead of promoting health (broadly defined) engendered depression, agitation and exhaustion.

For the so-called "new urbanists," Olmsted's concerns are as pertinent today as they were in the late nineteenth century. A preview of their views, addressed in a separate chapter, is apropos here. One of the sources of our current malaise, the new urbanists contend, is our practice of assiduously separating land uses. While it may have made sense at the height of the industrial revolution to cordon-off noxious industrial processes from the other pursuits of city life, this functional segregation has gone too far. Residential and commercial areas are also separated. Not only are these activities separated but, thanks to the central role played by the automobile, they are often separated by long distances (Duany et al. 2000). The result, sprawl, is very costly: it is environmentally damaging and requires massive energy inputs to sustain it. But the human impact is just as devastating. In his book, *The Geography of Nowhere*, Howard Kunstler describes many people's predicament this way:

> The amount of driving necessary to exist within this system is stupendous, and fantastically expensive. The time squandered by commuters is time that they cannot spend with their children, or going to the library, or playing the clarinet, or getting exercise, or doing anything else more spiritually nourishing than sitting alone in a steel compartment on Highway 101 with 40,000 other stalled commuters. Anybody who commutes an hour a day in each direction spends seven weeks of the year sitting in his car. (1993, 118)

The new urbanists, therefore, contend that the inhospitable landscape of the nineteenth-century industrial city has been replaced by the equally inhospitable suburban one of the twenty-first century; civilization's grand exchange of talents and development of human capital is compromised as much by one as the other. Olmsted's legacy—his determination to regularly question whether our urban plans and designs match our democratic aspirations—continues to inspire progressive thinking in the fields of architecture and urban planning.

The Park: A Three-Dimensional Symbol of Liberal Democracy

Olmsted's intention to create public spaces that would promote fraternity and the virtues of civilization fits comfortably within the republican tradition. These goals are pursued, however, within a larger intellectual framework—one whose existence Olmsted both presupposes and seeks to shore up. That tradition is liberalism. In many respects, a model park for Olmsted is an ideal spatial representation of a liberal democratic society. For instance, most accounts of liberalism propose that individuals are equal in value (even if equality of condition is not guaranteed)—a premise reflected in Olmsted's park design. According to John Locke, one of American political thinkers' main sources of liberal inspiration, human beings are fundamentally equal in their pre-civil or natural state—share the same rank in the chain of being. And Locke's view is not exceptional; liberal theorists exert great effort in establishing the equality of human agents before they voluntarily enter civil society, pace John Rawls' "original position" (Rawls 1971). In liberal political thought, once a civil society is formed or joined, *natural equality* gives pride of place to *civil equality;* that is, citizens of a liberal polity are guaranteed equal treatment by the government—a guarantee often expressed as an enumerated list or charter of civil rights and liberties.

While it may lack the conceptual precision of a philosophical treatise or the elevating rhetoric of a constitutional document, a well-designed public park, at least as Olmsted envisioned it, is an equally compelling *visual articulation* of civil equality. The best of these parks, as the name of Olmsted's most famous undertaking suggests—New York City's Central Park, designed by Olmsted and partner Calvert Vaux in 1858—are located at the geographic heart of the community. Such a park is easily accessed by people of every socioeconomic class. Furthermore, a multitude of uses is envisioned by Olmsted to allow for the enjoyment of a broad spectrum of park-goers: "[A]ccommodation of various kinds are to be prepared for great numbers of people, [even] many in carriages and on horseback … each one of whom must be led as far as possible to enjoy and benefit by the scenery" (1997d, 311). The values of access and of diversity of use (which, Olmsted vigorously contended, had always to be balanced against the value of preservation) permeated his own designs—not just of city parks but also his landscape projects that enhanced human use of places of extraordinary natural beauty, for instance, Niagara Falls (Spirn 1996, 91–113).

To encapsulate, in liberal thought human beings emerge as equals from the hand of nature and, subsequent to their entrance into civil society, via some form of social contract, are granted equal citizenship rights. From this narrative it follows logically that they are also free: where equality prevails, no one is by birth a master or slave. Thus, the individual is left with her own liberty to order her affairs as she chooses. Within the compass of liberal political theory, the idea of individual liberty, like equality, is prized—even if it is simultaneously paired with the concept of mutual constraint. I will deal with constraint below. For now, however, the task is to define Olmsted's notion of liberty, for this value, as much as equality, is integral to Olmsted's philosophy of park design.

Addressing the Prospect Park Scientific Association in 1868, Olmsted argued that one of the key characteristics that makes a piece of land, a particular natural site, attractive to human beings is that its topography and planting fosters *movement*:

> The absence of obstruction is the condition of ease of movement, and a park as a work of design should be more than this; it should be a ground which invites, encourages and facilitates movement, its topographical conditions such as make movement a pleasure; such as offer inducements in variety, on one side and the other, for easy movement, first by one promise of pleasure

> then by another, yet all of a simple character and such as appeal to the common and elementary impulses of all classes of mankind. (1997b, 151–152)

As this quotation suggests, in Olmsted's philosophical anthropology, apart from the importance traditionally associated with distinctive human faculties or abilities—that is, the exercise of reason, in its theoretical or practical dimensions, the use of language as reason's symbolic form—one of the chief marks of humanity is pleasure in physical locomotion. The desire and need for movement, *Wanderlust*, appears to Olmsted to be fundamental and must be accommodated. Indeed, this observation links up with the liberal value of equality mentioned earlier, for enjoyment of motion, in and of itself, is one of those *common* impulses of mankind, not to mention its role in conveying a person to different locations where a variety of pleasures can be experienced. Beyond all class differences, Olmsted suggests, there is a universal appreciation of certain pleasures of "simple character." Thus a shared humanity evinces itself first, in the pleasure received from the "ease of movement" and, second, from other pleasures, the experience of which also presupposes locomotion—the freedom to traverse geographic space.

In an urban setting, the significance of movement is magnified precisely because city living, as Olmsted and many of his contemporaries viewed it, was stultifying and confining, not to mention filthy and noisy. This urban critique would explain the appeal of Andrew Downing's work and the later creation of garden cities (pace Ebenezer Howard) and suburbs modeled on English country living. Olmsted penned the entry for "Park" in the American Cyclopedia of 1875. There he explained that the "most essential element of park scenery is turf in broad, unbroken fields, because in this the *antithesis of the confined spaces of the town is most marked*" (1997d, 311; emphasis added). And, to be sure, Olmsted did not neglect to include this "most essential element" in many of his park designs. The most famous example being "Long Meadow" in Prospect Park, a green magic carpet of turf that unfurls beneath a visitor's feet for nearly a mile. Moreover, in Central Park, Olmsted's and Vaux's Greensward plan included four transverse roads that were ingeniously sunk below the line of sight to enhance the Park's vistas (Beveridge and Rocheleau 1995, 55).

Yet, in spite of Olmsted's lyrical description of "unbroken fields" that invite movement, Olmsted's park designs mirror the values and principles of the liberal democratic society in which they are explicitly embedded. Consequently, locomotion will have to be legitimately restrained. In the

liberal tradition, as Isaiah Berlin explains, freedom is conceived "negatively," as the absence of interference from the state or other citizens: "Since justice demands that all individuals be entitled to a minimum of freedom, all other individuals were of necessity to be restrained, if need be by force, from depriving anyone of it. Indeed, the whole function of law was the prevention of just such collisions" (Berlin 1997, 199). If such collisions are not prevented, Berlin warns, "the individual will find himself in an area too narrow for even that minimum development of his natural faculties which alone makes it possible to pursue, and even to conceive, the various ends which men hold good or right or sacred" (196). Limitation is, in fact, an indispensable part of both of Olmsted's "arts"—landscape design and social planning. The artist must accept the creative potential and, just as honestly, the limitations of her chosen medium, the inalterable physical properties of the material she uses. She works, unavoidably, within or against a horizon of inherited conventional meanings and symbols which she did not feely choose. Likewise, the social theorist or parliamentary representative must acknowledge what the philosopher Immanuel Kant calls the "warped wood of humanity" (Kant 1985, 46). This less than flattering assessment of human behavior constitutes an inexpugnable social fact or reality that chastens liberal theory and practice—necessitates the skillful promulgation of laws and social codes to "harmonize" the freedom of each with the freedom of all.

Earlier we noted that Olmsted argued that parks should accommodate a variety of people and uses. Inevitably, he notes, "many ignorant, selfish, and willful [persons] of perverted tastes and lawless dispositions" would be participants in the great park menagerie (1997d, 311). Therefore, Olmsted warns that parks would need to be designed, "as far as possible," to ensure that each individual could "benefit by the scenery without preventing or seriously detracting from the enjoyment of it by all others" (311). So how did Olmsted propose to harmonize the liberty of each park-goer with the liberty of others? There were at least two ways. First, Olmsted would maximize movement and minimize impediments to it by segregating modes of transportation: foot, carriage and horseback. Second, he would seek to deter bad behavior that would interfere with freedom of movement or might destroy or deface public property by establishing a park constabulary.

In regard to the first strategy, Olmsted's plan for Central Park included an elaborate system of park circulation that included carriage, bridle, and pedestrian paths that were kept separate by the extensive use of underpasses

and bridges (Beveridge and Rocheleau 1995, 55). Not only were the different uses segregated, but each type of path was built to avoid collisions. Olmsted states, for example, that "[a] drive must be so prepared that those using it shall be called upon for the least possible exercise of judgment as to the course to be pursued, the least possible anxiety or exercise of skill in regard to collisions or interruptions with reference to objects animate or inanimate" (51).

But this design with meticulous routing and portioning was not self-policing. Thus, in 1858 the first Central Park Keepers' Service, a park police force, was established and placed under Olmsted's supervision.[2] Olmsted emphasized that the Park Commissioner's responsibility was to "keep" or preserve. After all, he says, it would make as much sense to neglect the Park's "furnishings"—that is, its expensive and carefully selected vegetation and sculpted terrain—as it would for a person to open her doors and windows to her home during a storm (1997d, 298). Olmsted sermonizes "that every foot of the Park's surface, every tree and bush, as well as every arch, roadway, and walk has been fixed where it is with a purpose, and upon its being so used that it may continue to serve that purpose to the best advantage, and upon its not being otherwise, depends its value" (299). By such policing and routing mechanisms Olmsted hoped to achieve his liberal goal of providing the utmost freedom of each consistent with the freedom of all.

According to critics of Olmsted, however, his parks offered only the semblance of liberty; the real purpose of the parks, this line of criticism alleges, was to be an effective tool of social restraint. This is a serious allegation—one that, if true, would undercut the democratic purposes that he attributed to his landscape designs. Dorceta Taylor argues, for instance, that Olmsted's park projects need to be interpreted in light of class antagonisms that existed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. While workers struggled to gain more time away from factories and more autonomy over their lives, "the middle class and the employers sought to monitor and control what workers did when they were away from the workplace" (Taylor 1999, 441). This essay has suggested how Olmsted's planned spaces for passive recreation embody the principles and values of a liberal democratic order. Taylor counters that, through the "aggressive" use of police and the "exclusion" of certain kinds of activities, Olmsted and Vaux fashioned spaces that exerted social control rather than promoting democratic freedom. "They used their social location as elite, middle class white males entrusted with enormous power and discretion," she writes, "to implement their moral, cultural, and social agenda" (450).

Moreover, viewed through a Foucauldian lens, Olmsted's parks, one might argue, employed a combination of design elements and park ordinances to normalize or discipline the behavior of its working class visitors.[3] The aim of what Michel Foucault calls disciplinary technologies—namely, "to strengthen the social forces … to develop the economy, spread education [and] raise the level of public morality"—bears a striking resemblance to some of Olmsted's explicit goals (Foucault 1979, 208). And where Olmsted saw progress—"There is no doubt that the park has added years to the lives of many of the most valued citizens and many have remarked that it has much increased their working capacity" (Taylor 1999, 447)—Foucault would see the insidious application of "bio-power," the "subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (Foucault 1990, 140–141).

That some degree of social control and behavior modification were entailed in Olmsted's project is undeniable. Furthermore, Olmsted, like every person, was influenced by his social conditions, and it would stand to reason that he would have evinced certain class biases. These class biases are best captured by Geoffrey Blodgett, who encapsulates them in the following way: "They included a stubborn faith in political and social democracy—provided that democracy remained responsive to the cues of trained and cultivated leadership; a belief that American society urgently needed to fortify itself against the crude and materialistic impulses of popular culture; and a hope that the tensions of a newly urban nation might be moderated by structural arrangements, both political and aesthetic" (1976, 870). No populist he, but that does not mean he was not a democrat. Olmsted and like-minded members of the "gentlemanly cosmopolitan elite" (871) believed in *noblesse oblige* and, as conservatives who were committed to democracy, dedicated themselves to community improvement and reform.

Olmsted's efforts at control and cultivation should not be dismissed, but they do need further contextualization. To begin, as Elizabeth Blackmar and Roy Rosenzweig point out, when Olmsted discussed the need to "train" the public in the appropriate use of parks, he did not "direct his prescriptions … at any particular class"; instead, he "drew his examples of improper park use from the upper and lower classes alike"—that is, racing carriages or horses, the vice of the wealthy, was just as taboo as throwing rocks (Blackmar and Rosenzweig 1992, 241). Moreover, it was Olmsted who stood against members of his own class who wanted parks to be the preserves of elites, sanitized spaces protected from the

masses of the "unwashed." Olmsted, for instance, contended that municipalities should fund parks rather than private benefactors, reflecting his concern that the latter course would lead to restricted access. Indeed, Olmsted was particularly solicitous of the needs of the indigent and ailing for park therapy. As Vice-President of the New York State Charities Aid Association during the 1870s, for example, Olmsted worked tirelessly to make sure that the cities' poor and sick would have access to his parks' curative properties: "[H]e sent circulars to all the doctors and ministers in the city with directions to Central Park by the street railways and a description of the facilities for convalescents." And he did the same in Brooklyn for Prospect Park, posting notices "in tenement houses and had thousands more distributed" (Beveridge and Rocheleau 1995, 48). For his commitment to open access and diversity, Olmsted was "rewarded" with a cavalcade of negative editorials from members of his own class (Taylor 1999, 460). As noted earlier, Kohn criticizes Olmsted for his reliance on "copresence" and the "hope that this performative equality [generous access for all classes to his parks] could substitute for the much more arduous and dangerous work of equalizing political power" (Kohn 97). Though many of Kohn's critiques hit their mark, it is fair to say that Olmsted's parks were more than mere "symbolic expressions" of equality (97), that Olmsted did, in fact, exert himself and risk his own political capital—to use Kohn's words, engaged in "arduous and dangerous work"—to defend access for all classes to his parks.

In regard to concerns about social control, one could do no better than turn to Jane Jacob's prescriptions for urban design as a way of mounting a defense of Olmsted. Jacobs will receive a fuller treatment in the chapter on New Urbanism, but for our purposes here, it will suffice to observe that she believed that small towns relied on a web of interpersonal relationships, using the basic currency of reputation—shame and honor—to achieve social compliance. By contrast, a city has to control not only its own residents but visitors "who want to have a big time away from the gossip and sanctions at home." For this reason, she suggests, city planners must employ more "direct, straightforward" methods (1993, 45). Jacobs famously recommends design elements that keep "eyes [constantly] on the street"—that is, a control mechanism that consists of "surveillance and mutual policing." Though this may strike one as Orwellian, she assures her readers that "in real life it is not [so] grim" (46). Indeed, the surveilling eyes are precisely what make the streets inviting and hospitable, the city neighborhoods vibrant and livable; where such eyes are absent, she observes,

people fear to tread. Similarly, Olmsted's park ordinances and park keepers encourage civility, an indispensable social virtue for democracies, without which person and property are endangered. Stephen Carter, in his book on civility, elegantly connects many of the concepts we have been discussing—democracy, freedom, civilization, and social control: "the word civilité shares with the words civilized and civilization (and the word city, for that matter) a common etymology, an Indo-European root meaning 'member of the household.' To be civilized is to understand that we live in a society as in a household, and that within that household … our relationships with other people … are governed by standards of behavior that limit our freedom" (1998, 15). There is no doubt that Olmsted's definitions of deviance and his understanding of deportment were colored by his class attachments, but there is also no doubt about his overall commitment to democracy and the value of his public spaces for democratic life.

Conclusion

The burden of this chapter has been to carefully consider the claim, first made by Charles Norton, that Olmsted's landscape architecture and planning activities represent the apogee of democratic artistry. We have learned that Olmsted's artistry entailed the pragmatic weaving together of liberal and republican traditions and ideals with the hope of nurturing a vibrant and resilient democracy. Olmsted's belief that the stakes are high, that the spatial politics of our built environment really do matter, is admirably expressed in his *Preliminary Report upon the Yosemite and Big Tree Grove* of 1865. "It is the folly of laws," says Olmsted, "which have permitted and favored the monopoly by privileged classes of many of the means supplied in nature for the gratification, exercise and education of the esthetic faculties that has caused the appearance of dullness and weakness and disease of these faculties in the mass of subjects and kings" (1990b, 505).

This European, aristocratic error—namely, of denying the vast majority of common people the benefits of natural scenery and good community design—is one that the democratic-minded Olmsted is determined not to repeat in America. Between old world aristocracies and new world democracies, in other words, there are more than "constitutional" differences. Free governments, Olmsted intones, seek to nurture citizens' aesthetic capacities by conserving places of extraordinary natural beauty for posterity and by establishing great public grounds for the enjoyment of all classes (504–505). In this effort, Olmsted's democratic artistry is unrivaled.

Notes

1. It is unclear, for example, why in Olmstead's "fourth stage" national identity would not give rise to actions motivated primarily by patriotism—a motive broader and more encompassing than the "narrow…domestic and local" incentives that he says define this stage. Jean Piaget (1896–1980) developed a four-stage theory of cognitive development; Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) further refined Piaget's model—resulting in a six-stage theory.
2. With the ascendance of the Tweed Ring, most positions were filled by patronage appointments; as a result, keepers' professionalism and moral commitment waned. Vandalism and crime spiked. Finally, in 1872, in the wake of the Tweed machine's demise, Olmsted was asked to *reorganize* the Keepers (Olmsted 1997c, 307). In his 1873 reorganization plan, Olmsted introduced the "round system" in which "patrol-keepers" would dutifully walk their beats—watching for disturbances and, interestingly, providing accountability for the "post-keepers" who were stationed at gates and other key locations (1997c, 281).
3. In 1860, for example, 55 Keepers in Central Park made 228 arrests, half of which were for mere violations of park ordinances (e.g. using indecent language, throwing stones, defacing property, picking flowers or walking on the grass). Drunkenness and disorderly conduct made up another third (Taylor 1999, 444).

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CHAPTER 5

Democracy and Individuality: Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacres and the Burbs

Frank Lloyd Wright is probably America's best known architect. Attaining national celebrity in a specific art or field of study does not come with the requirement that one's approach or subject matter have a national focus. But in Wright's case, the national perspective and the artistic endeavor were intimately connected; he believed it was his vocation to provide an appropriate architectural form for American culture. In Wright's opinion, that form would have to emphasize the horizontal line—both in the sense of architectural style and economic leveling—for America's democratic commitment required that freedom be, in all its guises, broadly distributed.

The intellectual taproot of Wright's egalitarian, decentralized landscape was Jeffersonian democracy. As the nineteenth century unfolded, however, Jefferson's vision for an agrarian republic was rapidly undermined by changing demographics. America, from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, became an increasingly urbanized nation. In 1840, roughly one in ten Americans lived in cities or towns with populations exceeding 2500. By the 1920 census, however, 51 percent of Americans were living in urban settings (Judd and Swanstrom 2008, 15–16). The reasons for this urban migration included both forces of repulsion and attraction: farm life was physically demanding and, often, economically unsustainable; the city, by contrast, offered economic opportunity and cultural amenities lacking in the hinterland. Nevertheless, cities, in the mind of Wright and other critics, had become victims of their own success. Many types of industrial labor proved to be as physically demanding and dangerous as farm work, and squalid living conditions in many cities made

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people long for a rural escape. Fortunately, according to Wright, new industrial technologies made the exodus from the city possible; these included the "motor car … radio, telephone and telegraph" (Wright 1994c, 46). New technologies like the automobile would enable people to live in a dispersed manner without having to forfeit access to basic services. In Robert Fishman's formulation, Wright was convinced that "Edison and Ford would resurrect Jefferson" (Fishman 1982, 123).

For the architect Wright, "building" democracy was not mere metaphor. Dismantling or abandoning existing structures, specifically the dense, high-rise city, and reconstructing the built environment were the crucial political tasks. Wright, in other words, was determined to set democracy on a firm *material* foundation: a political economy and built environment supportive of a democratic society, a material platform, as he put it, that would "finally let Democracy come through to us" (Wright 1994c, 65). In *Broadacre City*, Wright's plan and manifesto for a new social order, the "material" dimension of democracy occupied a privileged position. While the ballot box would not completely disappear, and legal frameworks would not be abolished, these were secondary in Wright's mind. The more urgent task was to emancipate people from economic exploitation, the menace of "rent" in all its guises, and to radically decentralize urban space. These changes, Wright believed, would usher in a democratic regime that genuinely promoted freedom, individuality and material well-being.

While Wright considered himself to be a prophet of decentralization and a new social order, many scholars have been critical of Wright's vision. James Howard Kunstler, for instance, emphasizes Wright's connection to American suburbanization, describing Broadacres as a "spread-out city of houses on one acre lots, a supernaturally tidy and idealistic version of what would become classic suburban sprawl" (Kunstler 1993, 165). Moreover, according to critics, not only did Wright's Broadacre City fail as a development plan—morphing, as it did, into cancerous growths of tract housing instead of the balanced, organic compositions of cross roads markets, small factories, and homesteads that graced his models—but its essential social aim, to foster democratic individualism, was incongruent with his design. Robert Fishman, for example, expresses doubts about whether Wright's homesteaders would "ever rise above self-seeking acquisitiveness" and asserts that there is scant evidence that decentralized societies would be more "free" or "creative" (Fishman 1982, 159).

This chapter agrees with and, in some places, attempts to sharpen these lines of critique; nevertheless, it also argues that studying Wright's

Broadacres' plan is important for at least three reasons. First, though he *does not* address issues central to contemporary democratic theory—for example, procedures for democratic decision-making, deliberation, and diversity (Habermas 1996; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Mouffe 1999; Young 1990)—Wright *does* bring into sharp focus an often neglected but critical dimension of democratic thought, namely, democracy's promise to deliver a superior "lived" reality, that it would provide an environment built to human scale and able to meet basic human needs. As he puts it, democracy cannot be something left "merely on the lips" but must be an "actual way of life and work, alive, and affecting, throughout, every human being today right where he stands" (Wright 1993b, 330). It may well be that Wright is naïve both in thinking such a place or community of citizens can be created without attending to important issues like distributive justice (in regard to his theory of property rights) or political legitimacy (in assuming that the authority of his architectural mandarins would not be questioned). Still, even with its weaknesses, Wright's insistence that so-called democratic institutions and procedures often fail to produce the material conditions necessary to realize the democratic values of equality and liberty pose an important challenge to democratic theorists. Second, though Wright's Broadacres manifesto is full of idiosyncrasies, it is one of the most fully fleshed out theories of twentieth-century decentralization. Since so few philosophical accounts of these phenomena exist, it is worth examining Wright's theory—its motivation, coherence, insights and shortcomings—especially since suburbanization and a commitment to democracy are enduring features of twenty-first century America. And, finally, Wright's implicit and intriguing (if somewhat inconsistent) philosophy of history has gone largely unexplored; this study seeks to remedy that scholarly gap.

The first section of this chapter will describe and analyze Wright's "materialist" version of democracy, one that emphasizes democracy's *built* spaces and *economic foundations.* The second portion will address the question of implementation—what Wright believed the prospects were for the realization of his vision. We will see, for instance, that Wright often speaks in teleological language, assumes that the building of Broadacres is inevitable. Explaining his reasons for optimism will require us to carefully untangle his multi-threaded philosophy of history. Finally, we will examine suburbanization and suburban sprawl—*not* exactly the Broadacres Wright hoped for but, nonetheless, the form that Wright's prophesied decentralization actually assumed.

The Broadacres Plan: Individuals Bursting from an Egalitarian Soil

Wright explains that Broadacre City is neither a design for a single urban space nor a municipal plan to be replicated in as many regions as possible; rather it would cover the "entire country" and be "predicated upon the basis that every man, woman and child in America is entitled to own an acre of ground so long as they live on it or use it" (Wright 1994c, 51). Viewed through the lens of the American homesteading movement, Wright's proposal appears quite benign. In the early years of the republic, lacking a consistent source of revenue and saddled with debt from the War for Independence, the federal government sold land—mainly to wealthy individuals and corporations. These beneficiaries of the public largesse made enormous profits on land speculation. Meanwhile, "pioneers" who attempted to settle on public land were often treated as outlaws. With the Preemption Law of 1841, Congress acknowledged this disparity in land distribution, dedicating, as the anti-rent advocate Thomas Ainge Devyr expressed it, "our public domain to landless men, in limited homesteads, instead of surrendering it to the greed of capitalists" (Julian 1885, 178). Specifically, the law permitted squatters who had occupied a piece of land for a designated amount of time to purchase up to 160 acres at bargain rates before the land was sold at public auction. And when President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act in 1862 the federal government was not simply *tolerating* the pioneering spirit but *inviting* individuals to settle the continent—as long as they complied with application and filing rules and made improvements on their land.

By the time Wright unveils his plan for Broadacres in the early 1930s, however, the physical landscape had changed. Presumably a person's "social right" to his or her "place on the ground," as sacred as one's "right to the sun and air" (Wright 1994c, 47), would not be redeemed by a dust bowl tract or rocky slope; instead, the substance of the right required access to arable land, and land suitable for building a home and other structures. But that kind of land was largely spoken for. Expropriation, then, would be a live option, perhaps unavoidable. Indeed, in Broadacres each county architect would not only have a "cultural relationship" but also a "certain disciplinary" relationship to county residents (Wright 1994c, 54); the architect would not only be charged with ensuring aesthetic unity in the settlement but would also determine how land should be distributed (or redistributed), based on need and merit.

If the Homestead Act and other pieces of legislation lent legal and historical support to an egalitarian proposal for continental settlement and land distribution, it was Henry George and his influential book *Progress and Poverty* (1879) that provided a compelling philosophical justification for Wright's Broadacre proposal. In Wright's canon, no other economist was fêted as often as he. George's work, in brief, sought to solve a fundamental economic riddle: the apparent coincidence of poverty and progress. George explains that "[g]iven a progressive community, in which population is increasing and one improvement succeeds another … land must constantly increase in value. This steady increase naturally leads to speculation in which future increase is anticipated, and land values are carried beyond the point at which, under the existing conditions of production, their accustomed returns would be left to labor and capital" (George 1987, 264). In other words, progress brought increasing land values and rents; the landowner, through no effort of his own, benefited from social development while the capitalist and laborer, because of the increased cost of land, forfeited profits and wages. The predictable result was the sound of a bursting economic bubble: the "partial cessation of production" and its corollaries, falling profits and job losses, led to "a cessation of demand" (268).

As the only solution to rid the world of the evil of the landlord's unearned increment, and thus to extirpate poverty, George prescribed the simple, yet radical step of "substitut[ing] for the individual ownership of land a common ownership" (George 1987, 328). All disincentivizing taxes on productive endeavors—agricultural and industrial, on both income and profit—would be replaced by a single tax on land that would absorb all former exploitative rents. The crucial move George makes, and the fundamental premise of his whole philosophy, is that *societies must distinguish between wealth and land*, between things which are the "produce of labor" and things which are the "gratuitous offerings of nature" (337). As long as people employed the land productively, they would have fixity of tenure and would own all improvements, but the land itself and the annual payment for its use would belong to the community (344). Consequently, the raison d'être for hoarding land, for speculation, would disappear, promoting a wider and more equal distribution of land. "The equal right of all men to the use of land," said George, later echoed by Wright, "is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air … for we cannot suppose that some men have a right to be in the world and others no right" (338). This all-important premise, the proposition that, ultimately,

the community owns the land, is the philosophical foundation upon which Wright bases his scheme of land distribution.

Guaranteeing that citizens can plant their feet on and assign their names to a little chunk of *terra firma* is a necessary but, according to Wright, certainly not a sufficient condition for attaining the democratic promise. Building houses and small-scale industries requires capital, and one key component of Wright's Broadacres' political economy is access to "some form of universal social credit" (Wright 1994c, 47). True democratic freedom for Wright entails that citizens are not held captive by finance capital; therefore, "freedom from speculation" ranks toward the top of Wright's hierarchy of values. The implicit qualifier—given the egalitarian bent of his new plan for society—is an amount of credit adequate to support a decent living, not free money for profligacy, extravagance or unrealistic schemes. Additionally, these homes and enterprises would have to be powered. To this end, the community would control utilities and natural resources. In Broadacres, Wright proposes, gasoline will be available "at the curb," as would water, electricity, and compressed air (53). Finally, in Wright's Broadacre manifesto, he declares a person's right "to the ideas by which and for which he lives: that is to say, public ownership of invention…" (47). It is uncertain whether Wright would countenance a short patent period, during which a person could be compensated for her ingenuity. What is clear, however, is that Wright decried a legal system where basic inventions—ones that could improve the quality of life for the community—were denied to many because of the costs associated with the stringent enforcement of intellectual property rights. Thus, there is an elegant parallelism in Broadacres: *physical* as well as *intellectual* property would be widely accessible.

Considering how meticulously Wright works the ingredients of equal opportunity into the soil of his "organic democracy," one naturally expects that Broadacres will bloom into a Rousseauean-style republic. Nonetheless, while both Broadacres and republicanism highlight the linkage between equality and democracy, as we will learn shortly, Wright's version of democracy departs significantly from the republican tradition. For its part, republicanism is solicitous of *social equality* precisely because of the ills it attributes to *social inequality*. According to Rousseau, to take one republican voice, inequality engenders "consuming ambition [among citizens], the zeal to elevate their relative fortune, less out of true need than to set themselves above others, [and it] inspires in all men a base inclination to harm each other" (Rousseau 1998, 42). Beyond preventing

the aforementioned social conflicts, equality, as Rousseau explains, is the lynchpin of republican politics for it fosters a common civic identity. As long "as several men gathered together consider themselves a single body," Rousseau propounds, "they have but one will, which is concerned with their common preservation and the general welfare" (148). But where civic equality among citizens does *not* obtain—where the social and economic distances between citizens is considerable—it will be impossible, Rousseau believes, for them to discern the commonweal and to work, collectively and cooperatively, for its achievement.

Wright, by contrast, is interested neither in forging civic identity nor in promoting participation. What is the result of de-coupling equality from these other republican ideals? One answer can be gleaned from Alexis de Tocqueville, who, unlike Rousseau, had the opportunity to travel in and carefully study American political culture. In America, Tocqueville encountered an empirical reality that corresponded to what he portrayed as the "logic" of democratic development, namely, the notion that equality spawns individualism. As we observed in the introductory chapter, Tocqueville argues that "in ages of equality every man seeks for his opinions within himself" (Tocqueville 1981, 395). On an equal plane, in other words, no one is master, none a slave. Since no person is an inherent authority in a democratic society, citizens, Tocqueville explains, "owe nothing to any man, they expect nothing from any man; they acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands" (397). This last phrase—"destiny in their own hands"—suitably captures Wright's hope for Broadacres, that it would be the realization of democratic freedom and independence, the dream that had eluded so many Americans. In Tocqueville, of course, the phrase clearly has a negative connotation: whereas aristocracy made a "chain of all the members of the community," democracy "breaks that chain and severs every link of it" (397). Indeed, in *Democracy in America* Tocqueville devotes much of his analysis to showing how these "severed links" are vulnerable to, on the one hand, a tyrannous majority and, on the other, a prospective despot, who relishes nothing if not individuals standing alone. Wright, for his part, hoped that social leveling would engender individualism but adamantly rejected the notion that democratic individuals, at least not the inhabitants of Broadacres, would be vulnerable to groupthink or despotism; instead, he urges, the latter are dangers lurking in twentieth-century America's increasingly urbanized landscape: in fact, where capital is concentrated so is the power

to exploit and, where people are violently "pig-piled" (Twombley 1979, 324) on top of one another, conformity is commonplace. Therefore, Wright calls for a radical makeover of the built environment; American democracy's health and future, he believed, hung in the balance.

Broadacres, then, is Wright's compelling vision of democracy—a regime form, from his perspective, whose primary purpose is to maximize liberty and celebrate individuality. He theorized that, once the material conditions described above were established, individuality would emerge "organically," would grow out of a soil carefully prepared. For Wright, democratic individuality is inextricably tied to at least three concepts: economic independence, vocational diversity, and the quest for excellence. All of these goals, Wright believed, would be easier to achieve on a Broadacres' platform.

Consider the first objective, economic independence. Since the plan of Broadacres "assumes that neither land nor money nor creative ideas can be speculative commodities … to be held over by somebody against the common good," Broadacres' citizens are "no hirelings" (Wright 1994c, 64). On the contrary, as long as they are willing to work, Broadacres would be the abode of self-made men and women, who possess the means, primarily land and social credit, to grow their own food and build their own cottage industries. Wright's blueprint, then, envisioned Emersonian self-reliance and Jeffersonian independence adorning the landscape.

But it is not simply economic independence that Broadacres nurtures; its vast horizon, combining the best of city and country, opens a variety of new possibilities for individual development and cultivation. City dwellers, once "divorced from nature by excessive urban idealism and parasitic living" (Wright 1994c, 52), would have access to all the recreational pursuits and therapeutic beauty offered by nature, and the farmer, "no longer an isolated human unit in the non-social hinterland," would have access to a variety of cultural amenities (53). And finally, the suburbanite, whose domestic and professional activities were rigidly segregated, would, in Broadacres, bridge family and work by maintaining a home studio or office that served the needs of the residential, recreational, and commercial entities positioned within the variegated compass of his domain. Thus, the "fragmentary" existence of modern human beings, so eloquently described by one of Wright's favorite German authors, Friedrich Schiller, in his "Sixth Letter" *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, would be replaced by a more wholesome and "rounded" life (52; Schiller 1982, 33).

Even more than Wright's affinity with Schiller, it is difficult to overlook the similarities between Wright and Karl Marx, especially in the latter's romantic mode. While Wright insisted he was committed to capitalism—if by that we mean an economy, ala Adam Smith, of small producers—he was called every ideological name in the book, including a communist. Indeed, the utopian aspirations of Marx and Wright converge on the value of *multidimensionality*. According to Marx, among other things, humans' one-dimensional character under capitalist conditions of production is attributable to an enforced division of labor, for "as soon as the distribution of labor comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape" (Marx 1978, 160). But a communist society, as Marx explains in a famous passage from his *German Ideology*, "makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic" (160). While Marx's and Wright's methodological approaches and philosophies of history are incommensurable, both value a social framework that emancipates people from obstacles to self-development, and both leveled withering critiques against concentrated economic power, advocating a more equitable distribution of the forces of production. However, whereas Wright argued that the means of production should be spread across a fruited plane of small holders, Marx insisted that the means of production be held collectively.

Finally, we take up the last component of Wright's notion of individualism—virtue or excellence. A thought that deeply troubled Tocqueville, having witnessed the consequences of a democratic revolution in France and having traveled widely in America, was the loss of human excellence. Aristocratic societies had come under fire for reserving privileges—including education—for the few. While they excluded the majority of their citizens from a richer existence, aristocratic societies did, Tocqueville acknowledged, provide opportunities for *some* select people to cultivate themselves to an impressive degree. By contrast, Tocqueville worried that democracy's emphasis on social leveling, its attendant suspicion of talent and intelligence, would engender a self-absorbed and culturally stunted "individualism"—one more homogenous than its "aristocratic" cousin and certainly mediocre by comparison. Wright, an artist, an eccentric and recognized genius, harbored similar concerns; as a person who snubbed his nose at social convention, especially sexual conventions, he came under

intense pressure to conform and, at one point in his life, unflatteringly labeled his beloved America a "mobocracy" (Wright 1994b).

If Wright truly wanted to resist mobocracy, a critic might reasonably inquire whether he was advocating for the wrong urban tableau? That is, given the premium he places on individuality, is it not rather a dense urban environment that he should have promoted? Herbert Muschamp points out that "much of the impetus behind the emergence of urbanism derived from the belief that there was more individualism and diversity in one New York City block than in a continent of conglomerate-owned suburban subdivisions" (Muschamp 1983, 146). Cities, many urbanists contend, offer a broader canvass of cultural amenities and experiences for self-fashioning, and they increase the number of personal encounters, which in turn, increase the likelihood that one will find like-minded people with whom to launch collaborative and creative projects (Katz and Bradley 2013; Florida 2004).

Nevertheless, Wright was convinced that Broadacres would be his antidote to mobocracy. A utopian scheme as yet unrealized, it would be different from the democracy that Wright or his fellow Americans *actually* experienced; its brilliant design—marrying political, economic, and built environment reforms—would, Wright opined, militate against the tyrannous majority that sought to dim his personal incandescence through public ridicule and legal threats. He argued passionately that a real democracy, the kind Broadacres would instantiate, is the genuine form of aristocracy—an aristocracy of all: "Democracy is the highest form of Aristocracy this world has ever seen because it will have made Quality integral. It is Manhood upright and unafraid, achieved fresh, free, and true with each and every generation, freely choosing to be governed by its Bravest and Best" (Wright 1994a, 252).

There is no denying Wright's own quest for authenticity, a value he often pursued at great personal cost, nor his cultivation of celebrity status. Yet, for all his "uniqueness," Wright never escaped from but was profoundly influenced by the crises of his day. The Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the ensuing Depression, for example, negatively impacted his architectural practice; few clients could afford his services. In a larger sense, however, Wright, like his compatriots, had to formulate an intellectual response to the convulsions of industrial capitalism. Broadacre City and its constellation of economic and political ideas represent an effort to do precisely that. But to what degree do Wright's views resemble those of his contemporaries?

Answering this final question will help us to appreciate both the novelty of the Broadacres' plan and its historical context.

In a campaign stop in San Francisco in 1932, the same year Wright published *The Disappearing City,* Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivered his famous "Commonwealth Club Address." In the speech, Roosevelt fulminates against "financial Titans" and likens corporations, which had become "uncontrolled and irresponsible units of power," to "feudal baron[s]" whose ambitions needed to be contained (Roosevelt 2004, 408–409). Curtailing these forces of economic concentration was indispensable, for "equality of opportunity as we have known it," contends Roosevelt, "no longer exists":

> Our industrial plant is built; the problem now is whether under existing conditions it is not overbuilt. Our last frontier has long since been reached, and there is practically no more free land. More than half of our people do not live on the farms or on lands and cannot derive a living by cultivating their own property. (410)

This last quotation could easily have been penned by Wright. But, ultimately, Roosevelt and the New Dealers proffered solutions quite different from Broadacres.

Historians debate the extent to which the New Deal can be described as a coherent program versus a series of policy responses to continuing crises but, as Alan Brinkley suggests, we can at least identify an evolution of the types of responses—and their corresponding ideas about the proper role of government—pursued during Roosevelt's administration. In the early years, many New Dealers were enamored of an "associational" or corporatist approach, which would involve cooperative agreements among government, industry and labor, to create a "smoothly functioning, organic whole out of the clashing parts of modern capitalism," pace the National Recovery Administration (Brinkley 1989, 93). There was also a regulatory approach that, especially after the Supreme Court struck down key ingredients of the NIRA (National Industry Recovery Act of 1933), supplanted the cooperative vision. The regulators or antitrust group were convinced that the industrial economy was too big and complex to be managed along associational lines; instead of industrial harmony, the antitrust crowd believed "Americans would have to accept the inevitability of conflict and instability … [and would have to] rely on the state to regulate that conflict and instability" (93). According to Brinkley, however, it was not the "atomizers," those who believed in a "Brandeisian concept

of a decentralized, small-scale economy," who were tapped to lead the regulatory state (89). Instead, it was Thurman Arnold who took the reins as the Department of Justice's Director of the Antitrust Division. Arnold did not think big business per se was the problem; indeed, he argued that larger entities could achieve greater economies of scale, as long as they did not artificially inflate consumer prices through anti-competitive practices (90). By the late 1930s, however, another change was evident: a "compensatory" view of government—"which would redress weaknesses and imbalances in the private economy without directly confronting the internal workings of capitalism"—was replacing the regulatory model (94). In short, the Roosevelt administration became more explicitly Keynesian, relying on government's fiscal powers to tax and spend to promote consumption and economic growth.

Of all these approaches, the Brandeisian desire to dissolve large corporate entities into smaller pieces is arguably the most congenial to Wright. But that was a road not taken. Even so, as we can now appreciate, Wright's proposals were at once more radical and conservative than any of the New Deal models. In his mind, for instance, it made no sense to address the obscene concentration of land and financial capital by concentrating more political power in the hands of the government. Instead, in his model, the state, the national government, nearly withers away. Since he assumes that each person would have property, and thus would be free of want, there would be no need for a large welfare state; since industry would be mostly of the cottage variety, i.e. decentralized, there would be little need for a large regulatory state, conditions most conservatives would applaud. On the other hand, many components of Wright's Broadacres plan would discomfit conservatives—for example, allowing the government to expropriate land and undermine intellectual property, providing free credit and abundant energy at public expense. To the degree Wright aimed to "level" American society, he charted a course every bit as "radical" as erecting a regulatory or welfare state.

Nevertheless, whereas the conditions in Broadacre City, materially speaking, may be egalitarian, in terms of politics, Broadacres' citizens are distressingly disempowered. There is no local or municipal government per se, and government at the national level, which offers opportunities to participate for only a few, is strictly limited in scope—to traditional matters of sovereignty, such as defense. At Broadacres' most privileged level of government, the county, Wright seems to entrust architects with sweeping powers, with little discussion of legal or constitutional checks.

At this juncture, it may be helpful to place Wright on the democratic theory spectrum that we outlined in the opening chapter. Wright's position bears the least resemblance to classical democratic theory—a view in which citizens' ability to govern themselves is given pride of place. There are no town meetings (pace the New England tradition) in Broadacres and, despite Wright's Jeffersonian leaning, his plan lacks anything like Jefferson's ward system, which created a civic space for participation. Though Wright was not attracted to the classical model, one might suspect that a pluralistic model, given his fondness for decentralization, would find favor. In the Founding period, Madison had argued persuasively that an "extended" republic, one that encompassed a large territory and a wide variety of groups and interests, would produce a democratic politics at once more moderate and stable than the conflict-ridden regimes of antiquity (Madison 2005). In the twentieth century, as we noted earlier, this pluralistic model was adopted and refined by thinkers such as Robert Dahl, who called it "polyarchy." On this account, democratic agency is not lodged in some homogeneous "majority" but rather in a vibrant arena of autonomous organizations—unions, religious groups, business interests, civic groups and, of course, political parties (Dahl 1982). It is true that Wright's Broadacre City plan supports cultural and recreational activities, accommodates social interaction—at the crossroads markets, the community center and the cathedral—that might facilitate the formation of various interest groups, but the *center of gravity* remains the homestead and the individuals that comprise it. Relationships may develop on a number of different fronts, but Wright, unlike the pluralists, does not attribute political significance to this sphere of civil society; there is a profound absence of common purpose and civic capacity.

Although there is no evidence that Wright consulted Joseph Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, his views have the most in common with his Austrian-American contemporary's elitist version of democracy. According to Schumpeter, in such a large, heterogeneous setting as the modern state, it is naïve to think that the "common good" could be identified and articulated by a citizen body. Moreover, citizens are described as mostly uninformed and politically uninterested. Given this relatively low estimation of people's political capacity, the primary political act becomes choosing between rival teams of elites—leaving policy formulation to the winners (Schumpeter 1976). In Wright's plan, however, the mandarins are not politicians but architects, specifically the county architects, whose mode of selection is unclear. Like

his mentor Louis Sullivan, Wright believed the architect could claim the mantle, at least figuratively, of the people's truest representative, because he alone possessed the insight to bring aesthetic and moral unity to an otherwise fragmented society: "The artist [according to Wright] has the vision to see farther into the future than his fellow citizens. He has the imagination to embody their inchoate desires in concrete form, giving meaning and direction to social change. The artist is thus the real planner and the natural leader of society" (Fishman 1982, 95). Therefore, in order to call Broadacre City a "democracy" and to establish architects as its leaders, Wright had to wring nearly every drop of classical meaning from the term. This irony is captured admirably by Herbert Muschamp: "No matter that he [Wright] was regarded as the greatest master in his field, that his name was a household word; he could not hope to impose the harmony of art upon the pluralistic whole without subverting the [democratic] culture whose qualities he sought to express" (1983, 178).

In order to implement the Broadacres plan, some major alteration of the social contract would have to take place. Specifically, in Robin Hood fashion, Wright proposes a significant redistribution of private property. That, in turn, presumes there would be some fair process in place, a process invested with democratic legitimacy. Yet Wright is mostly silent on this point. In other words, whereas Wright is adept at drawing attention to the unequal (read "undemocratic") state of resource and property distribution in twentieth-century America, he fails to provide the democratically validated institutions and norms that would necessarily accompany the unprecedented public seizure of private property implicit in his Broadacres' manifesto.

The Historical "Necessity" of a Decentralized Future

The genesis of suburbanization in America and the many historical factors that facilitated its growth over time are well documented in several studies (see, for instance, Hayden 2003; Jackson 1985; Warner and Whittemore 2013). Generally, these scholars point to suburbanization as the result of interventions by a number of different social actors: private investment by transit owners and developers, lobbying by the construction industry and realtors, and government support (state, local, and federal) in the form of mortgage insurance, tax incentives, and transportation appropriations.

Depending on the author, the role of certain individuals, events, or institutions may receive more emphasis than others. But, in the main, thanks to these historians, we are much more knowledgeable about the nitty-gritty "how" and "why" of suburbia. However, the narrative that interests Wright is quite different. Instead of focusing on things like mortgage amortization or federal transportation appropriations, Wright fixes his sights on civilizational patterns and technological and cultural change. Astonishingly, Wright claims to have had the equivalent of a crystal ball, to have been able to see, with a high degree of certainty, what America's future built form would look like.

There are at least three distinct (though often overlapping) varieties of teleological history that one finds in Wright's prophetic utterances, all of which point in the same direction: toward a decentralized future. Indeed, it is the combined force of these three philosophical histories that account for Wright's sanguine attitude about Broadacres' future. The first strain is the anarchist tradition, represented (in varying degrees) by such thinkers as Peter Kropotkin and Lewis Mumford. These writers believed that human history was experiencing (or would experience in the near future) a decisive moment of decentralization. According to Kropotkin, for instance, the West had experienced first a period of communalism, encompassing rural village life and urban guilds. Then, around the sixteenth century, with the emergence of nation states, centralization—what Kropotkin calls the "Roman-imperial-authoritarian" tradition—becomes entrenched. However, technological change, linked to the industrial revolution, would usher in a completely different set of political, social, and economic conditions. This new social landscape, defined by the "popular-federalist-libertarian" movement, would witness the blurring of the lines between urban and rural: factories would invade the fields and, thereby, become more human (Hall 2002, 150–151).

Lewis Mumford, an eminent architectural and planning historian, put an American spin on Kropotkin's narrative. He argued in 1925 that America had experienced three "migrations," and that a fourth was underway. According to Mumford, the first migration is best symbolized by the covered wagon, and its purpose was to clear the land, to open the continent—even if achieved destructively: "[T]he history of the pioneers is the history of restless men who burned the forests of the Mohawk Valley in order to plant farms, who shifted into the soft glacial deposits of Ohio in order to cleave their plows through its rich soil; men who grabbed wheat land and skinned it…" (Mumford 1925, 130). Close on its heels

was the second great movement of people—folks from the countryside and from abroad—who worked in and helped to build the "factory town" (130). And with the third migration, the industrial system's "productive effort" played second fiddle to "financial direction"—the growth of banking and insurance, advertising and marketing (132). These financial centers, metropolises, and sub-metropolises (boasting populations of greater than 500,000 inhabitants) "drained" the factory towns and small villages of "goods, people, and pecuniary resources" and added cultural amenities the aforementioned settlements mostly lacked. However, in language reminiscent of Wright, Mumford contends that the disadvantages of this urban form—"financial centers, cities where buildings and profits leap upward in riotous pyramids"—became painfully evident. Fortunately, a more promising migration, the fourth, was commencing. And its basis, claims Mumford, was a technological revolution that had been slowly gaining momentum in the early part of the twentieth century—"a revolution which has made the existing layout of cities and the existing distribution of population out of square with the new opportunities" (133).

According to Peter Hall, many of the ideas contained in Wright's thinking, "whether consciously or not," were shared by Mumford and his compatriots in the RPAA (Regional Planning Association of America)—including "anarchism, liberation by technology, naturalism, agrarianism, and the homesteading movement" (Hall 2002, 280)—though the RPAA's commitment to community planning, notes Hall, "is hard to trace" in Wright (312).

If the first strand of Wright's teleological history is influenced by the anarchist tradition, the second strand employs Hegelian logic. Suffice it to say that while Wright may have had a reputation for being immodest, even egomaniacal at times, he had nothing over the Teutonic philosopher. Hegel believed that while other thinkers and philosophical systems had made contributions to our understanding of reality, he alone had comprehended or grasped the whole, the "Absolute." And what a story he spins. In short, Hegel claims that *Geist* (variously translated as Mind or Spirit) externalizes itself—that is, embodies itself in physical form. At first Mind does not recognize this object as its own but rather is alienated from it. Over the course of human history, *Geist* achieves increasing clarity about its true essence and, finally, in Hegel's epiphanic philosophy, realizes that nature is not "other" than mind but its own embodiment, another aspect of itself, and thus is reconciled to itself, becoming fully self-conscious. If

this brief description of the odyssey of *Geist* seems remote from the inhabitant of Broadacres, the dialectical logic employed should not, as will be demonstrated momentarily. What is important to note is that Hegel reaches a logical terminus or conclusion by starting with concepts at hand and revealing both the partial truth they contain and, simultaneously, their inner contradictions. These initial "theses" give way to their alter egos or balancing opposites—antitheses. The antitheses, in turn, assert their claim to superiority by addressing a deficiency or deficiencies in the original thesis but then, inevitably, disclose their own incompleteness, a lack of internal coherence that calls forth a new synthesis, a higher conceptual level that "sublates" (*aufhebung*) or cancels what is irrational and preserves what is rational in the previous movements.[1]

If one finds a dialectical account of Mind coming to know itself and its own freedom in Hegel's philosophy of history, it is in Wright's Broadacre scheme that one finds a similar dialectical study, namely, that of "civilization." According to Wright, "[t]ime was when mankind was divided between cave dwellers and wandering tribes" (Wright 1993a, 71). These two impulses or, more cognitively appraised, two strategic orientations to the environment, divided the human family and produced "enmity" between the two groups. Wright makes no secret about which group he champions—portraying the wanderers felicitously swinging from leafy branch to leafy branch or living vigorously under an azure sky versus the cave dwellers, who fearfully "lurk in such hidden holes and material cavities" as they can find (71). Though Wright ascribes several positive attributes to the wanderers—freedom, health, a sense of adventure—there are subtle concessions made about the inadequacies and dangers of a nomadic life; for instance, the security of their offspring depends upon "such safety as seclusion by distance from the enemy might afford" (72). This vulnerability and exposure, as part and parcel of the adventurer's life, points, to use a Hegelian idiom, to a "contradiction" in the thesis, which drives us to the antithesis—the cave dwellers (cliff dwellers and, ultimately, city builders)—who, at first glance, have solved the wanderers' security problem. However, the fortress existence, too, has its drawbacks. Without the liberty to face the elements unprotected and the creativity and strength that requires, Wright implies that cave dwellers' bodies languish and their minds become dulled. Eventually social change overtakes the cave dwellers, leading to their obsolescence.[2] The opposition between these two movements must, with their attendant "truths" and "falsehoods," be overcome, sublated. Indeed, this is precisely what Wright sees happening

in his day—"gradually the body of mankind, both natures [wanderer and cave dweller] working together, has produced what the body of mankind calls civilization" (72), the clearest embodiment of this synthesis being the Broadacres plan.

One might legitimately wonder whether this Hegelian interpretive frame is too far-fetched, especially given that a similar model—also with Georgist moorings—was close at hand, namely, Ebenezer Howard's garden cities. In his *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, published in 1902, Howard presented a Goldilocks-type solution to the grimy modern city, which he called his three magnets theory. Whereas the "country magnet" lacked cultural amenities ("too cold") and the "city magnet" was plagued by pollution and vice ("too hot"), combining both into a "Town-Country" magnet—which would establish medium-sized towns in a bucolic rural setting, containing a carefully planned mix of residential, manufacturing, agricultural, commercial, and cultural elements, all bounded by a green belt—would be "just right," avoiding the vices and capitalizing on the virtues of both original settlement types (Howard 2004). Howard's theory, taken together with the social thinkers referenced earlier, leaves no doubt that "decentralization" was in the air in the early twentieth century. In addition, as we have seen, Kropotkin, Mumford, Howard, and Wright were all interested in a hybrid model of city and country. Nonetheless, though there are important similarities, Howard's garden cities do not capture what has been loosely characterized as Wright's Hegelian approach. Specifically, Howard's solution is more pragmatic and technical. What it lacks, then, is both the sense of historical, organic unfolding that one gets in Wright (and Hegel) and the idea of logical necessity.

To begin, Wright talks about historical forces. He refers, for example, to democracy as a "moving spiritual force" (Wright 1993a, 82), a force, he asserts, that is allied with a couple of others to bring down the city and raise Broadacres: "Surviving instincts of the freedom-loving primitive; new instruments of civilization we call the machines working on new and super materials, together with this great new ideal of human freedom, Democracy: these are three great organic agencies at work, *as yet only partly conscious* [emphasis added] but working together to overthrow the impositions and indirection that have fostered and exaggerated the city as an exaggerated form of selfish concentration" (83). Much like Hegel's portrayal of *Geis*t in his philosophy of history, where Mind works behind the backs of and employs the selfish passions and desires of individuals and nations—entities blithely unaware of the grander plan of

Spirit—to achieve its purposes (Hegel 1988, 28), Wright describes "moving spiritual forces" that are only "partly conscious" of their role in bringing about Broadacres (Wright 1993a, 82–83). Furthermore, Wright talks of Broadacres as a *necessary* civilizational outcome. Howard's garden city plan was a brilliant remedy for the ailing Victorian city but, as insightful and ingenious as the plan may have been, there is no suggestion from Howard that, had *he* not put pen to paper, garden cities still would have sprung up in the English countryside. In Wright, by contrast, the logic of the dialectical struggle between wanderers and cave dwellers propelled civilization toward a Broadacre world: Wright leaves the strong impression that, had he not existed, a planner like him would have *had* to have been conjured.

Before turning to the third teleological thread, it is worth pausing to assess the arguments adduced thus far. In Wright's anarchist mode, like Mumford and Kropotkin, he extols technological change—gadgets such as the "internal combustion engine"—and credits these technologies with the progress being made toward the "new freedom" (Wright 1993a, 77). Indeed, in all of these anarchist planners there is a heavy emphasis placed on technological determinism. The potential problem with this, as seen in incipient form in another anarchist planner of the same period, Patrick Geddes, is that the technologies celebrated by the decentralists were viewed as welcome innovations, in part, because they represented an improvement over environmentally destructive technologies. These older, "paleotechnic" (Geddes' word for the "ruder" period of the Industrial Age) machines, like steam engines, were "associated with the waste and dissipation of the stupendous resources of energy and materials…" (Geddes 1912, 181). By contrast, says Geddes, the "neotechnic" technologies—those relied upon by the decentralists, such as rural electrification and automobiles—will help to conserve resources, instead of depleting them; will grow and preserve national and civic wealth, casting aside the paleotechnic era's obsession with personal accumulation; and will use regional planning to promote "health and well-being" (181–184). While Geddes' critique of the paleotechnic era was incisive, given its concern about the environmental impact and the energy policy consequences of an earlier industrial period, he failed, as did Wright, to foresee that these problems would not disappear with but may actually be aggravated by a decentralized, neotechnic world.

On the Hegelian front, Wright, as we have seen, argues that history tilts toward a Broadacres' future, implying that the logical progression of the

dialectic of the wanderer/cave dweller, and not just the machinations of developers and realtors, makes a decentralized future more certain. On a positive note, though Wright employs a Hegelian logic, he avoids, as far as one can tell, the baggage of Hegel's metaphysics—and the plethora of philosophical questions Hegel's speculative philosophy invites. The proverbial bad news for Wright, however, is that absent Hegel's metaphysics, the "necessity" of Broadacres evaporates. For Hegel, logic is more than a formal aspect of reason. More profoundly, reason, since Hegel is a philosophical idealist, "rules" or determines reality; that is, logic does not merely attempt to describe or make sense of reality but thoroughly shapes it. As Charles Taylor puts it: "The rational, truly universal thought which is expressed in our [logical] categories is thus spirit's knowledge of itself. Since the external reality to which these categories apply is not an embodiment of *Geist*, but is posited by *Geist* as its embodiment, and hence reflects the rational necessity of thought, in grasping the categories of thought about things, we are also grasping the ground plan or essential structure to which the world conforms in its unfolding" (Taylor 1975, 226). Having explicated this apparent difference in their understanding of logic, we are in a position to say the following: Wright's philosophy of history, in its Hegelian mode (*sans* the Hegelian metaphysics), results in an intriguing interpretation of the flow of history—from ape to high tech decentralized state. But it competes with a host of other historical interpretations and is no more likely to be realized than Le Corbusier's *urban* utopia.

The final teleological strand relies less on formal logic and foregrounds culture, climate and landscape more than technological evolution. For the sake of description, we will call this Wright's Herderian view of history. In *Another Philosophy of History*, Johann Gottfried Herder explains that protean human beings, those "hieroglyph[s] of good and evil," were bound, "given the structure of our world," to be "modified a thousand times over; that the climate and circumstances of an age will create national and worldly virtues, flowers that grow and flourish almost without effort under one sky… (Herder 2004, 71). But the circumstances that give rise to a particular national identity are unique and will "languish" if transplanted to a different soil. Thus the Greeks "set up in their place, having been given their sky, land, constitution, and a fortunate point in time, they formed, created, named … [But] when the human spirit sought with all its powers to awaken their age a second time, the spirit had turned to dust, the shoot remained ash. Greece never returned" (75). According

to Herder, then, the peculiar physical circumstances of a people, blended with their unique traits and language, produces the various nations and cultures that inhabit the globe.

Herder's philosophical account of multiculturalism could accurately be described as "organic"—a term central to Wright's thinking. While the word has many meanings for Wright, one important notion is that an architect's designs should not be based on artificial, external criteria, such as an architect's own preferred style, but instead should be based on the more "natural" structure suggested by, among other factors, a client's unique set of needs and desires, the "terrain," "native industrial conditions … and the purpose of the building" (Wright 1993b, 300). Wright is, in fact, the trailblazer for this organic architecture. Like an Old Testament prophet inveighing against pagan practices and his chosen people's betrayal of their own sacred values, Wright fulminates against American architects who "take their pick from the world's stock of 'ready-made'" designs and against the built environment their imitation produces—a "polyglot tangle of borrowed forms" (Wright 2002, 106). If only Americans could "discover what our vast good ground is good for," Wright says with yearning, "a native culture would come to us from loving our own ground" (Wright 1994b, 301).

As a relatively young country, an appropriate and compelling indigenous architecture had not yet appeared in America, that is, until (he believed) his own architecture began to dot the landscape. The new, truly American architecture would take its cue from democracy itself: "America, more than any other nation, presents a new architectural proposition. Her ideal is democracy, and in democratic spirit her institutions are professedly conceived" (Wright 2002, 106). With the advent of his Broadacres plan, and with the support of his prairie and usonian home designs, Wright was convinced that not only would her "institutions" be democratically conceived but America's built environment as well. As quintessentially democratic, his architecture would "place a premium on individuality," would be committed to the horizontal plane and its principles of democratic equality and domesticity (106). It would be thoroughly animated by "the real American spirit" which is especially prevalent in the "West and Middle West, where breadth of view, independent thought, and a tendency to take common sense into the realm of art are more characteristic" (108). In short, in his Herderian mode, Wright believed that Broadacres was America's *destiny* precisely because it was the *organic form* best suited to America's landscape and culture.

Compared to Wright's philosophies of history previously discussed—the Hegelian attempt to crack the logic of civilizational evolution or the anarchist-inspired focus on anticipating the direction of technological change—the Herderian version is refreshingly concrete. It is rooted in a particular soil and history. While more chastened, the Herderian history still requires much of the theorist. Specifically, it requires what Isaiah Berlin translates as "an imaginative act of empathy," *Einfühlen*, on the difficulty of which Herder himself does not mince words: "How unspeakably difficult it is to convey the particular quality of an individual human being, and how impossible it is to say precisely what distinguishes an individual, his way of feeling and living… How much [more] depth there is in the character of a single people, which, no matter how often observed, and gazed at with curiosity and wonder, nevertheless escapes the word which attempts to capture it…" (quoted in Berlin 1997, 405). Of course this cautionary remark did not stop Herder himself from attempting to formulate empathetic portraits of nations. Similarly, Wright's confidence in his own understanding of America rarely wavered. Whether it was a purported Hegelian-like ability to decode history, an incisive interpretation of American culture and landscape, ala Herder, or merely a keen observation of the direction of technological development, pace the anarchists, one thing is clear: Wright accurately predicted the continuing decentralization of America in the twentieth century. Whether that suburban built environment ultimately conformed to the version of Broadacres for which Wright had so passionately advocated, is another question entirely.

From Broadacres' Ideal to a Sprawling Reality

In the event, Wright's Broadacres, in its pure form, never came to pass. Suburbanization and sprawl certainly *did*—flourishing in the second half of the twentieth century and continuing apace into the twenty-first century. To be fair, the suburbs have, in fact, enabled many people to realize a portion of Wright's dream, namely, procuring for themselves a small plot of land and a dwelling in which to shelter their families and nurture their individual aspirations. Nevertheless, it would be very difficult to refute the claim that most American suburbs (Broadacres "light") failed to support the robust notion of individualism that Wright championed. While it is too simplistic to portray American suburbs as homogeneous (Nicolaides 2002; Wiese 2004), it is true that decentralization was much

more likely to take the form the Levitt brothers and their successors promoted than the decentralization envisioned by Wright. The Levitt built environment of mind-numbing sameness—generally, enormous tracts of cookie-cutter houses surrounded by few cultural or recreational amenities, with the cost of infrastructure being pushed on to local governments (Hayden 2003, 136)—is not the individual-friendly model Wright had in mind.

Moreover, Wright failed to detect the tsunami of consumerism—every new suburban house would need a new washing machine, a new outdoor grill, a new vacuum sweeper, and, of course, a new car for commuting—that would, largely, overwhelm his cherished values of individual production, creativity, and self-reliance. In the end, Broadacres lost out to what Lizabeth Cohen dubbed the "consumer republic," a "strategy that emerged after the Second World War for reconstructing the nation's economy and reaffirming its democratic values through promoting the expansion of mass consumption" (Cohen 2003, 127). Like Broadacres, the consumer republic, too, promised a superior material basis for democracy. But given the consumer republic's strong current of conformism, that is, the leveraging of mimetic desire inherent in mass marketing schemes, and its substitution of the (mostly) passive consumer for the dynamic, self-expressive producer, one would be hard pressed to imagine a movement more antithetical to Wright's system of values (Muschamp 1983, 184–185).

One of the most stinging ironies emerges when one considers how our current decentralized landscape is marked by inequality. Wright's manifesto proposed a radical socioeconomic restructuring of the American landscape—providing each family unit with private property, social credit, and basic resources (energy and water) at little to no cost—in an effort to establish equal opportunity, to create a sufficient material base from which democratic individualism could spring. Yet Broadacres' proposals were never implemented, and equal opportunity in America is as elusive as it has ever been. After analyzing 2000 US Census data, Thad Williamson reports that residents who live in newer, outer-ring census tracts had a median household income of $62,730, while residents in census tracts dating from the 1940s had a median household income of $39,764 (Williamson 2010, 129). While significant, this modest disparity between income in suburbs and central cities "masks," Williamson argues, the extreme gap between the wealthiest suburbs and the inner city. Indeed, Williamson found that "tract median household income (weighted by number of households) in

the richest decile of urbanized metropolitan tracts … averaged $93,976, compared to $20,186 in the poorest decile of such tracts" (130). Moreover, since school funding in the United States is dependent on property assessments, this creates a perverse geography of educational inequality. According to the Education Trust, in 2004–2005 schools in the wealthiest quartile, after adjusting for cost of living differences, spent $938 more per-pupil (131). This is troubling, because educational levels and economic outcomes are closely correlated.

The problem is not simply that inequalities between suburban and urban cores exist and are substantial. A further claim that Williamson makes is that suburban growth and affluence can be *causally linked* to urban stress and decline. To cite just a couple of examples, urban scholars like Anthony Downs contend that exclusionary zoning practices inhibit poor people from gaining access to better employment and educational opportunities in suburbs, essentially locking them out of upward mobility. Affordable housing—which often takes the form of row houses or multifamily dwellings—can be excluded through techniques such as lot size requirements and rental prohibitions (Williamson 2010, 135). Further, the federal government has been subsidizing suburbanization at the expense of urban centers, via the homeowners' mortgage interest deduction, highway construction, and low fuel taxes. Such subsidies to suburbanites, Williamson observes, "are rarely publically scrutinized or challenged by mainstream politicians; in contrast, direct spending on urban needs and attention to urban issues often reflects current political tides" (136). Instead of the "Broadacres of democratic opportunity" that Wright promised would be available to all, we have inherited a "Broadacres of socioeconomic disparity," caused, at least in part, by the racially (discussed in more detail in the final assessment chapter) and economically exclusive methods and designs used to build the suburbs themselves.

Conclusion

As the preceding catalog of shortcomings illustrates, the Broadacres plan failed to deliver what it promised. Peter Hall deftly summarizes how the heirs of Broadacres have been short changed: "This then was the ironic outcome: After World War II a suburban building boom created a kind of Broadacre City all over America, but entirely divorced from the economic basis or the social order Wright had so steadfastly affirmed… Americans had got the shell without the substance" (2002, 316). But considering

Wright's daring, perhaps whimsical, attempt to meld polar opposites within the American political tradition—that is, a communitarian or populist view of land and resources and a libertarian exaltation of the individual—failure comes as no surprise. Nevertheless, the enduring value of Wright's Broadacre City plan is the challenge it poses to Americans' presumptuous attitude about their democratic polity, namely, that because people are allowed to vote, theirs must be, *ipso facto*, a democratic regime. It is the American people, Wright would passionately argue, who often settle for the "shell" rather than material "substance," for democracy is about much more than the franchise: in a word, it is about architecture. For all of his flaws, Wright was often able to distill and articulate what was essentially American, and it was the Great Plains and prairies that provided the clue. A broad landscape, he said, intimated the wide expanse of opportunity America could provide for individual development but it also required a commitment to "flatness," an egalitarian playing field that would make individuality possible for all (Wright 1992, 106). Like the horizontal thrust of his prairie homes, Wright believed that the material incarnation of America, its social and economic architecture, would have to maintain its horizontal orientation if the American dream were ever to be fully realized.

Notes

1. A good example of Hegel's dialectical thinking, since we are talking about social theory, can be found in his *Philosophy of Right*, where he conveys his readers from the "simple unity" of the family, to the extreme "particularity" of civil society; however, we learn that a nobler synthesis is required to do justice both to human beings' need for unity or belonging *and* their desire to develop their individuality. For Hegel, the answer is the modern state, which, he claims, provides both a national identity, the moment of unity, and creates institutions and laws to protect particularity (Hegel 1967, 110–125).
2. "As physical fear of brutal force and any need of fortification grow less," argues Wright, "so the ingrained yearning for the freedom of the mobile hunter, surviving, finds more truth and reason for being than the stolid masonry or cave dwelling defenses erected and once necessary to protect human life and now slumbering in the manufacturer, the agrarian and the merchant. Those defenses, in any case, modern science and war have made useless and a man's value may again depend not so much on what he has but upon what he can do" (72).

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PART III

Modernism: Promise, Problems and New Prescriptions

CHAPTER 6

Democratic Ambivalence: Robert Moses and Modernist Urban Planning

Robert Moses and our protagonist from the last chapter, Frank Lloyd Wright, shared the stage during roughly the same period in American history, and Wright, in the minds of many, was as much a "modernist" as Moses. Both men were possessed of an imperious demeanor, believing implicitly in the correctness of their visions and the technical knowledge that undergirded them. Wright and Moses were both passionately committed to the prerogatives of the architect or planner and displayed disdain for the input of the people whom they supposedly served. That new building materials and techniques could radically alter the built environment—and improve the lives not just of the privileged but, importantly, of the masses—was a modern conviction that animated the work of both men. But the similarities mostly end there. The starkest difference is that Moses wanted to save the metropolis; Wright wanted to dismantle it. And though there are modernist aspects of Wright's work, ultimately, his Broadacre City strikes the observer as a revival of Jefferson, a landscape dotted with smallholders, albeit ones plugged into the grid and connected by superhighways. And if Wright's decentralized plan merely theorized mobility, Moses *was* the Prime Mover of people and goods in America's greatest modern city, New York, building bridges, tunnels, parkways, and expressways that made such movement possible.

Whether Moses's work is more archetypal of modernism than Wright's is not an issue to be settled here: in our narrative, Wright is more important for his commitment to decentralization, for Broadacres' intellectual links to suburbanization. What *is* clear is that Moses's relationship to democracy,

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like Wright's, is complex—even tortured. While Wright extolled the idea of democracy at every turn, his political theory, as we have chronicled, reveals a tension between his egalitarian proposals for distribution (and probable redistribution) of natural resources, land and capital and his muscular view of individual liberty, and a yawning gap between his paeans to democracy and the unchecked authority he cedes to his country architects. By contrast, when it came to declarations about democracy, Moses was more circumspect. In spite of the high-profile public positions he held, and in spite of being knee-deep, at times, in democratic policymaking, Moses's invocations of democracy, certainly less frequent than Wright's, appeared more perfunctory than celebratory. One gets the impression that, like most modern planners and architects, Moses was more pragmatic: he could take or leave democracy, depending on whether it facilitated or impeded his goals in a given instance. This chapter contends that urban modernism is marked by ambivalence toward democracy. Whereas the fissures within Wright's democratic theory—however sincere his commitment to the democratic cause in his own mind—are largely due to his idiosyncratic philosophy, Moses's posture toward democracy exemplifies and uniquely embodies modernist ambivalence.

A Complicated Nexus: Modernism and Democracy

Though democratic inconsistency is characteristic of modernism, it is often modern architecture's compatibility with democracy, not its betrayal, which first meets the eye. Indeed, one of the first, great institutions dedicated to teaching modernist ideas was the Bauhaus, which rose, not coincidentally, with Germany's first republic, from the ashes of the Second German *Reich*. One of the founders of the Bauhaus, Walter Gropius, explained that new forces of production, such as steam and electricity and new building materials—iron, concrete, and glass—made completely new building forms possible (Gropius 1994, 440). Modernism not only ushered in new techniques, materials, and forms but also presented an opportunity to re-unite art and craft, for "art is not a profession," asserted Gropius: "There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsmen. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, transcending the consciousness of his will, the grace of heaven may cause his work to blossom into art. But proficiency in a craft is essential to every artist" (435). While Gropius's desire to break down the barriers between the monumental and decorative arts, to "reunify all the disciplines of

practical art" (435)—that is, incorporating sculpture, painting, and handcrafts into a compelling architectural plan—may be an example of the characteristically German longing for cultural wholeness and integrity (pace Richard Wagner's concept of his operas as *Gesamtkunstwerks* or "total works of art"), even more it represents modernism's utilitarian turn. For Gropius, art was not merely an artifact to hang on a museum wall, a thing to be critiqued by cloistered academics or to be possessed by the elite. Rather, by joining forces with the crafts, art could ennoble and beautify the material conditions of everyday life. Thus, the artist's intrinsic qualities of creativity and innovation would be applied to the new materials and techniques in order to serve a broader public purpose.

Because building is a "collective work," notes Gropius, "its vitality depends not on individual interest but on the interest of the whole. A positive inclination for building must be promoted" (Gropius 1994, 441). What might be an example of such a "positive inclination," a way for architecture and its associated arts to promote the "interest of the whole"? One way was by meeting the demand for cheap but functional housing. To this end, Gropius supported mass prefabrication of residential buildings. Industrial standardization would allow factories to produce a host of structural elements—akin to life-sized building blocks—that could be assembled on site in a manner that met the homeowner's specific needs. Not only the house itself but its accessories—lighting, appliances, and furniture—would be Bauhaus artifacts that combined cutting-edge technology and sleek design. It was no longer the Lord of the Manner, the local patricians, or the industrial elites who were the exclusive beneficiaries of craftsmanship; modernist architecture and its affiliated industrial arts strove to "democratize" good design.

Yet, while modernism *can* be seen as an artistic movement congenial to democracy, such a picture would fail to account for the extreme ideological diversity among it planners, architects, and state builders—would not capture its essentially promiscuous character. In his book, *Seeing Like a State*, James C. Scott lists "Henri Comte de Saint-Simon, Le Corbusier, Walther Rathenau, Robert McNamara, Robert Moses, Jean Monnet, the Shah of Iran, David Lilienthal, Vladimir I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and Julius Nyerere" as some of the doyens of modernism; a more politically diverse cast of characters would be difficult to imagine (Scott 1998, 83). And the point is not simply that there are vast ideological distances between these figures. As the case of modernist architect Mies van der Rohe illustrates, it is entirely possible for the *same* person to accept commissions to design

structures for a sundry array of political clients. Richard Pommer, calling Mies the "Talleyrand of modern architecture," reports that, within a decade, Mies "designed the Karl-Liebknecht-Rosa Luxemburg Monument for the Communist Party in Germany, the Barcelona Pavilion for the Weimar Republic, a monument to the war dead for the Socialist-led government of Prussia, and a competition project for the German Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair of 1935, which, had it been built, would have been the first Nazi monument of international significance" (Pommer 1989, 97). While trying to discern the outline of Mies's political preferences is tricky, Pommer claims that a "shadowy portrait" emerges of a person committed to republicanism and the free market (108). Nonetheless, the important claim is this: *whatever* his personal politics, Mies was able to thrive as a modernist under a number of different political regimes and in two different countries, Germany and the United States.

Given that modernism has been embraced by so many different political stripes, it might be fair to ask whether the center really holds, whether modernism can be defined as a distinct style or movement. A review of the literature does, indeed, reveal several characteristics that are commonly associated with modernism; most of which are not overtly political. For the purposes of this study, we will focus on five characteristics. First, the designs of modernist architects and planners often attempt to sever ties to past styles and to de-emphasize cultural traditions. For instance, when discussing Oscar Niemeyer's urban plan for Brasília, Brazil's austere capital, critic James Holston describes Niemeyer's effort as one of "total decontextualization" (quoted in Hall 2002, 232). Or, reflecting on the models Le Corbusier presents in his *La Ville Radieuse* (*The Radiant City*), Scott remarks that "[n]one of these plans makes any reference to the urban history, traditions, or aesthetic tastes of the place in which it is to be located. The cities depicted, however striking, betray no context; in their neutrality, they could be anywhere at all" (Scott 1998, 104). Second, in contrast to the twisting streets of a medieval city, modernist planners and architects were determined that their cities would offer plenty of light, air, and space, and they would accomplish this by replacing the tangle of the old city with large, geometric designs that included huge open spaces and tall buildings. Le Corbusier, perhaps the most famous modern planner and architect, expressed this idea, as Hall points out, as a kind of paradox: the goal was to "decongest the city by increasing density," that is, by building massive, vertical structures on a small portion of the total land area available (Hall 2002, 222–223). And third, one could be sure that modern

buildings and urban plans were the brainchild of some expert—with little to no input from those living in the urban habitat. Modernism, whether it favored the political Right or the Left, was almost always a form of technocracy. It worshipped planners, architects, and engineers and their mathematical and scientific lingua franca. In the following passage, for example, Le Corbusier expresses modernism's typical esteem for the "rational plan" and its corresponding disdain for non-experts and political processes: "The despot is not a man. It is the Plan. The correct, realistic, exact plan, the one that will provide your solution once the problem has been posited clearly, in its entirety, in its indispensable harmony. This plan has been drawn up well away from the frenzy in the mayor's office or the town hall, from the cries of the electorate or the laments of society's victims" (quoted in Scott 1998, 112).

The preceding elements also bear the stamp of another ethos—a commitment to the "new"—our fourth characteristic. Modernists are loath to be caught flat footed: their built environments must constantly be renewed and remade. This frenzy of activity can lead to revolutionary breakthroughs, but it can also prematurely stamp out promising ideas and destroy valuable, highly functional "old" buildings and communities, all in the name of change and progress. If our fourth element relates to time—namely, the past being buried by present activity oriented toward the future—the fifth element relates to space, specifically, vanquishing space via the movement of information, commodities, and persons. Beyond the advent of technologies that transmit information, modernism, especially as it relates to the built environment, was fascinated by new modes of transport—trains, planes, and automobiles—and their corresponding "pathways," railways, airports, and, of course, highways.

Finally, it should be noted that in our introduction (and throughout the work as a whole) urban modernism, like the previous chapter's suburban sprawl, has been tied to an individually inflected understanding of democracy. The third and fifth elements above—the cult of personality and mobility, respectively—illuminate this connection. It is the master builder or planner who imposes his or her (usually his) idiosyncratic vision upon reality. In short, one of modernism's connections to individuality is precisely the exalted role it accords the designer, whose ideas often trump other values or take precedence over community input. Equally significant is the emphasis placed on mobility, and in the case of modernism, this is almost always *auto*-mobility. The goal is to maximize freedom of movement and the concomitant opportunities for modernity's independent monads—

to increase individuals' ability to move rapidly from place to place, *without* increasing their attachment to place or creating the social bonds and obligations that accompany place-based community, which might impair individuals' liberty and freedom of choice.

Moses and Modernism

References to the recasting of urban space and to the cult of mobility bring us back to the figure of Robert Moses, the Master Builder. The argument here is not only that Moses was a successful builder of urban structures but that his attitudes, methods, and creations embody modernist tenets. If we briefly return to our five characteristics of modernism, it is easy to discern them in the Master Builder's *modus operandi*. There are many illustrations of Moses's embrace of modernism's historical and cultural "decontextualization," but one will suffice, and it takes the form of a rare plan he was actually prevented from building: the Brooklyn-Battery Bridge. When Moses's Triborough Authority took the reins of Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel in the late 1930s, Moses wanted to make one "minor" change: to transform the tunnel plan into a magnificent bridge. The problem, as critics explained, was that Moses's plan, instead of preserving one of the most beautiful waterfronts left in the city of New York—as provided for in the original tunnel plan—would have destroyed it: "The approach ramp linking the [proposed] bridge to the West Side Highway … would actually be a road wider than Fifth Avenue, a road supported on immense concrete piers, and it would cross the entire park—the entire lower tip of Manhattan Island …[Its] anchorage and piers [would] obliterate a considerable portion of Battery Park" (Caro 1975, 646). Not only a priceless view but, equally important, a sense of national "place" and identity were threatened. Caro explains how the Age of Skyscrapers had already sent Manhattan property values soaring so high that "history could no longer find a place on it" (649). Lower Manhattan's Federal residences—the haunts of Jay, Madison, and Hamilton, the site of Washington's inauguration—had mostly succumbed to the wrecking ball or were crowded by new gleaming office buildings, and now Moses wanted to appropriate Battery Park as well, knocking down the historic Battery Fort (649). In the end, it took nothing less than the War Department to stay Moses's hand; without this intervention, Moses's grandiose bridge would have spanned the waterway between Manhattan and Brooklyn and, in the process, destroyed an irreplaceable cultural treasure.

In regard to modernism's penchant for technocracy, Moses started his career as a reformer, passionate about substituting a modern administration of public affairs for government by political machine and corrupt alliances; however, just because Moses favored transparency and efficiency did not mean that he supported popular participation in decision-making. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the British Civil Service, whose professionalism and impressive credentials he had come to respect during his time at Oxford (Moses 1956, 8), and he surrounded himself with—and listened almost exclusively to—a cadre of experts for his entire career. In other words, Moses possessed a decidedly elitist bent. The design of cities, in Moses's opinion as well as Le Corbusier's, was a technical enterprise requiring training and intelligence that exceeded the capacity of the average citizen. And from the 1930s onward, whenever it came time to build, Moses usually turned to the modernist prophets for inspiration. Robert Fishman reports that Moses was "increasingly captivated by a vision of a city of towers-in-parks and expressways" that derived ultimately from the work of Le Corbusier and his disciple (and later Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design), Josep Lluís Sert, and from the CIAM (Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne) Athens Charter of 1933 (Fishman 2007, 124).

What was vexing and disorienting about living in Moses's New York, reports Marshall Berman, was that Moses laid waste to our world, "yet he seemed to be working in the name of values that we ourselves embraced" (Berman 1988, 295). Berman is referring, of course, to the modern value of progress and the enchantment with the "new." Indeed, if any city in the "New World" was a champion of these values, it was New York. Berman recalls standing on the Grand Concourse, the Bronx's "closest thing to a Parisian boulevard," a street that boasted "rows of large splendid" apartment houses built in "Art Deco" style, considered "modern in their prime," and watching one of those buildings being demolished to make room for Moses's Cross-Bronx Expressway. Then Berman waxes philosophical:

> I felt a grief that, I can see now, is endemic to modern life. So often the price of ongoing and expanding modernity is the destruction not merely of 'traditional' and 'pre-modern' institutions and environments but—and here is the real tragedy—of everything most vital and beautiful in the modern world itself. Here in the Bronx, thanks to Robert Moses, the modernity of the urban boulevard was being condemned as obsolete, and blown to pieces, by the modernity of the interstate highway. Sic transit! (295)

Finally, that Berman references the Cross-Bronx Expressway as a modern icon, just one roadway among hundreds of miles of roadways Moses built in and around the city, is not unexpected for Moses believed that a city's heart—its soul—was manifested in traffic. "Cities," averred Moses, "are created by and for traffic" (Fishman 2007, 125). Motion, movement, as we noted earlier, is a preoccupation of modern design. It is not surprising, then, that architectural critic, Siegfried Giedion, would portray Moses's work as the pinnacle of modernism (Berman 1988, 302). Giedion explains that "[a]s with many of the creations born out of the spirit of this age, the meaning and beauty of the parkway cannot be grasped from a single point of observation, as was possible from a window of the château at Versailles. It can be revealed only by movement, by going along in a steady flow, as the rules of traffic prescribe. The space-time feeling of our period can seldom be felt so keenly as when driving" (quoted in Berman 1988, 302).

Moses as Promoter of Democracy

Because Robert Caro's extraordinarily adroit and richly detailed portrait of Moses seared the "Powerbroker" into public consciousness, it seems appropriate to begin with a partial reconstruction, highlighting the important ways in which Moses's works and sentiments were broadly *supportive* of a democratic political culture. Whether one is a critic or an admirer, all sides can agree on the fact that Moses was probably the greatest builder of public works in American history; even Caro urges us not to compare his output with that of other individuals but with the achievements of whole periods, the "Age of Skyscrapers" or the "Age of Railroads," none of which can capture the immensity and diversity of his oeuvre (Caro 1975, 830). For present purposes, the aspect of his work that is most important is its mostly "public" character. Although America is considered a liberal democracy, all too often the liberal part has been the head, while democracy has been mere tail. That is, liberalism's enshrinement of individual rights, especially private property, and its embrace of market imperatives, has led to a severely shrunken and enfeebled public sphere. In New York State, and especially in the metropolitan area, Moses's recasting of the built environment—the conjuring of new parks, parkways, highways, bridges, and tunnels; the construction of international exhibitions and cultural and educational institutions—began to redress this imbalance.

To appreciate what Moses accomplished for the people of New York City, one needs to be reminded how much public spaces, under Tammany

mismanagement, had been allowed to deteriorate. Frederick Law Olmsted's verdant Central Park lawns had become "expanses of bare earth"; at Coney Island, one of the only beaches accessible to the city's poor, visitors treaded "gingerly among broken glass and filth" (Caro 1975, 334–335). Perhaps the wretched condition of Central Park's zoo best captures the decay: "Because the Menagerie did not adequately care for its animals or dispose of them when they grew old, its exhibits included such old pensioners as a senile tiger, a puma with rickets and a semi-paralyzed baboon. Its most fearsome exhibits were rats, which roamed it in herds and had become so bold that they were stealing food from the lions' feeding pans" (334). But this desiccated landscape was about to change for, in January of 1934, new Fusion Mayor, Fiorello La Guardia, named Moses Commissioner of a unified (all five boroughs) City Parks Department. Within one year, not only was the grass growing again in Central Park, but the menagerie too had been transformed; vigorous, well-cared for animals cavorted in their gleaming, story book-themed home. In slum areas all over the city, where previously there had been scant attention given to recreational needs, 69 new parks and playgrounds sprouted from the ground, a 50 percent increase in the city's recreational space (375; 378).

That Moses was able to accomplish this feat in 1934 can be attributed to the fact that the federal government poured massive amounts of money—mostly WPA (Works Progress Administration) funds that Moses was able to procure and disburse—into public works in an attempt to tackle Depression-era unemployment. In many respects, however, Moses's re-making of the city's recreational landscape during the first years of the New Deal was merely an extension of his *earlier* work on that other enormous "playground," Long Island. From an aerial vantage point, Long Island's spectacular beaches and ocean views seemed like an obvious recreational destination for New York City dwellers; from the ground level, however, such a prospect appeared nigh impossible. City residents who wagered a trip to the North Shore of Long Island encountered "bumper to bumper traffic" and discovered that the "hills and beaches had been monopolized by the robber barons of America, who had bought up its choicest areas with such thoroughness that there was hardly a meadow or strip of beach within driving distance of New York still open to the public" (Caro 1975, 10). Prospects on the South Shore were no more promising. Its beach front property was just as jealousy guarded as the territory of the northern Gold Coast, in this instance, by the Great South

Bay fishermen and residents of independent townships. If city residents venturing out to Long Island did any swimming in the early 1920s, notes Caro, they were likely swimming in their cars, that is, in their own sweat (154). Nevertheless, in spite of overwhelming odds, Robert Moses, who prided himself on getting things done, accomplished what had, just a few years before, seemed unattainable: Jones Beach, at the time America's largest (nearly 8000 acres of transformed shoreline) and most spectacular, opened in 1929, and all the land required for a Northern State Parkway had been acquired. A more detailed discussion of Moses's "methods" will follow later but, suffice it to say, Moses's research acumen, his discovery of the availability of Old Brooklyn Water Supply property in the heart of the Island, and his willingness to cut deals with barons like Otto Kahn and with the Nassau County GOP Boss, G. Wilbur Doughty, loosened the grip of private interests and pried Long Island open like a fresh clam to the city's masses (157, 209, 301).

In refurbishing Central Park—and creating scores of new parks and playgrounds in the City—and in fighting to provide access to and to establish public beaches on Long Island, Moses was not just building public works: he was fortifying a democratic political culture. A strong democratic political culture, in addition to providing a generous space for individual ambition and self-actualization, also promotes and preserves public goods. Of course the freedom accorded to individuals in a democracy will inevitably produce differences in wealth and, because of this income disparity, people who possess more money will have greater mobility and leisure, will be able to afford, both quantitatively and qualitatively, more recreational opportunities; nevertheless, basic mobility and access to sunlight and fresh air, to recreational opportunities, to places of natural beauty, should not—in a democratic regime—be dependent on one's income. This democratic value, the importance providing access to public amenities for a broad spectrum of citizens, was, as we learned earlier, the primary motive for Olmsted's public park projects. As we will explore in greater depth in Chap. 8, access to these goods is often a prerequisite for exercising some of the key "capabilities"—for example, play, use of imagination—that Martha Nussbaum identifies as being central to human dignity (Nussbaum 2011, 33–34). It is within this larger democratic frame that the import of Moses's expansion of the public domain can be understood. As Kenneth Jackson puts it, Moses did "have a consistent and powerful commitment to the public realm: to housing,

highways, parks, and great engineering projects that were open to everyone" (Jackson 2007, 70).

And Moses's re-balancing of the spatial ledger was not just a matter of expanding the public realm, and therefore facilitating public access to recreational areas and other public goods, it was also a matter of how his public spaces—at least in the early part of his career—were designed and adorned. A prime example of Moses's civic architecture would be the 11 swimming pools and bathhouses he and his team completed in the summer of 1936. Departing from the Beaux-Arts aesthetic that prevailed before the Depression, Moses's pool complexes, according to architectural critic Lewis Mumford, were "well suited to the children of the Machine Age," were models of "sound vernacular architecture" (Gutman 2007, 79). Moses's team of architects, led by Aymar Embury, was on a strict budget and used mostly brick, concrete, and prefabricated building materials. In accord with modernist design, "the structural bays of the steel-frame buildings were expressed on brick-clad elevations, and industrial sash and glass block were used to let light into locker rooms" (80). But the designs did not legalistically adhere to strict definitions of modernism: most of the pool pavilions boasted "monumental central entries"; "decorative details ranged from historicizing to modernist" and "clocks, towers, arches, domes, fountains, and bleachers also added to the drama of the settings" (81). Beyond the impressive decorative details, the pools were state-of-the-art, using modern filtration and aeration systems, and were ingeniously designed to maximize use; for example, underwater lights were installed to enable working people to swim after dark, and, during the off-season, changing rooms were converted into basketball courts; the pools themselves became dance floors (80). As Marta Gutman explains, "as the swimming pools opened, one each week during July and August of 1936, they won praise in the local press for their grandeur, modernity, and accessibility—qualities that revealed the best face of the New Deal, the social dividend that FDR had promised to deliver during his 1932 election campaign. Again and again, Moses and his colleagues were lauded for putting ordinary people first; for celebrating them with remarkable, technically sophisticated public architecture" (81).

Every built environment tells a story. The question is: what kind of narrative emerges from Moses's pools? Westchester County, the Upper West Side, the Gold Coast—and so many other enclaves of privilege; Wall Street and the luxurious suites of professional office buildings; large industrial and retail space: all of these spaces speak of private enterprise and indi-

vidual achievement—key components of the American political tradition. But none of these residential or commercial "architectures" speak directly to common purposes and shared prosperity and acknowledge the contribution of the average worker, men and women, whose efforts were indispensable to the others' success. But Moses's pools, as Marta Gutman observes, "celebrated" these humbler contributions. The American landscape, given its commitment to pluralism and competition, will naturally manifest a high degree of architectural diversity; however, where the landscape is absolutely dominated by private uses and private projects, with little evidence of public purposes, it raises serious questions about the health of the body politic. In New York City, Moses made a significant contribution to the "democratization" of urban space.

Reviewing political speeches from Moses's day and our own, one quickly puts aside the naïve notion that appeals to self-interest have no place in a republic. Indeed, sober assessments of how candidates' policies will likely impact people's economic and social existence are a normal part of every voter's calculus in a democracy. Nonetheless, civic education in a healthy democracy challenges people to *also* consider the common weal, to form a conception of the common good that can inform and shape private interest. Imagining the common good, however, requires some understanding of the wants and needs of other citizens, presupposes forms of social intercourse. And with this theme, we arrive at another contribution of Moses's civic architecture, namely, its integrative potential. Citing Ken Worpole's scholarship on the social implications of the construction of large, open-air swimming pools in Europe during the interwar period, Gutman applies Warpole's insights to Moses's pool construction during the same period in New York. The essential argument is that pools—and one could easily extend this claim to Moses's parks and playgrounds—were spaces of "informality" where divisions and barriers between working class men and women could be broken down (Gutman 2007, 73). As noted in a previous chapter on Olmsted, we need to be careful not to claim too much. Moses's public spaces, no more than Olmsted's, were guaranteed to generate strong civic bonds that could lead to more coordinated action, but that does not mean that they were not valuable as civic spaces that promoted tolerance and sociability. Moreover, besides the ethnic and gender barriers that were softened in such informal spaces, intergenerational connections were also fostered: "Moses was also keenly aware of changing patterns of leisure [namely, that people had more free time], and was thus intent on modernizing the city's recreational landscape

to include sites for active recreation that would appeal to adults as well as attract young people—to mix adult playgrounds, as it were, with abundant facilities for children's active play" (73).

Moses as Anti-democratic Force

As the preceding section shows, there are many ways in which Moses's modernist projects supported and nurtured a democratic political culture. Unfortunately, what Moses gave with his right hand, he often took away with his left; that is, one can make a strong case that Moses was undermining democratic culture as much as he was building it—that many of his public works and designs were "un-civic," impeding access to recreational resources and segregating citizens by race and class. Moses, as we will see, operated like an elitist, leaning almost exclusively on expert opinion and insulating himself from critical feedback and input from common people and their advocates. That things may not always be as they appear with Moses can be illustrated, first, by studying his use of public authorities. As the term suggests, public authorities are quasi-governmental entities created to provide a public service (such as supplying water) or to construct public works. Ann Bowman and Richard Kearney define a public authority as a "type of special district funded by nontax revenue and governed by an appointed board" (Bowman and Kearney 2008, 279). Seizing on the unique financing ("nontax revenue") and governance provisions (e.g. appointed instead of elected boards) of public authorities, Moses was able to transform these public-oriented entities into personal fiefdoms (Gutfreund 2007, 89).

In 1933 and 1934, Moses helped to establish seven separate authorities, modeled on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (established in 1921): the Triborough, Bethpage, Jones Beach, Henry Hudson, Marine Parkway, and Hayden Planetarium authorities (Caro 1975, 616). Normally, an authority was created to build a single improvement, say a tunnel or bridge. A bond (or bonds) with a specific expiration date would be issued for the project and would be financed through user fees, such as a highway toll. When the project was completed—and the bonds paid off—the authority would evaporate, its goal achieved.[1] Moses, however, noticed that some of his authorities' revenues far exceeded the annual "carrying charges," the cost of interest and amortization, for various projects (617). This was true, for example, of the Henry Hudson Bridge. As Caro describes it, when Moses realized this, his "supple mind" began to

"coil" around new possibilities. In 1938, the annual income of his authorities—one says "his" because not only did Moses sit atop many authorities but he also, thanks to his success in building public works and the accolades and public favors these successful projects brought, exercised enormous influence over most New York City mayors and thus was able to dictate appointments to authority boards—was approximately $4.5 million. But, as Caro explains, this amount was not as impressive as $81 million, which was the amount of "forty-year, four percent, revenue bonds that could be floated" based on his $4.5 million revenue stream of tolls and fees; he would have $81 million "to create dreams and power" (618).

To fully appreciate the power that flowed to Moses through the conduits of the public authorities he controlled, one needs to understand both the astonishing powers delegated to them and the ways in which they were insulated from democratic control. Similar to a sovereign state, authorities had the right to issue enforceable rules and regulations governing their operations and related activities and even had the power of eminent domain. Moreover, authorities could violate "home rule" (local control by municipalities) and build projects across multiple jurisdictions and could also circumvent public hearings, an important democratic check on government agencies (623, 632). Caro dramatically summarizes the unique character of authorities and Moses's use of them as a modification of the constitutional order itself: "In proposing to give the institution substantial governmental powers and a lifespan at least of decades, possibly of centuries … Moses was in effect, whether or not he thought in such terms, proposing to create, within a democratic society based on a division of powers among three branches of government, a new, fourth branch, a branch that would, moreover, in significant respects, be independent of the other three" (624). Moses, then, was not only building public spaces but was also generating political space for himself, space that afforded him maximum maneuverability and control over the construction of the former.[2]

An important lesson that can be learned from Moses's use of authorities is that just because something is allegedly "public" in character and is assumed to serve the common good, a closer look may reveal, especially where Moses is involved, a weaker democratic commitment than what initially meets the eye. We have credited Moses with expanding public space in New York and, thereby, providing the City's working and middle classes with previously inaccessible or non-existent recreational opportunities. By contrast, Moses's collaboration with the Metropolitan

Life Insurance Company to construct new housing after WWII highlights a different inflection of his spatial politics, namely, the embrace of social *exclusion* as opposed to *inclusion*. According to Martha Biondi, Moses wrote amendments to the New York Redevelopment Companies Act (1942) to allow for *private* as opposed to government selection of tenants in joint public-private housing ventures (Biondi 2007, 117). In 1943, the city of New York and Met Life entered into a contract to build thousands of well-appointed apartments for veterans and their families in Stuyvesant Town—representing an attempt to begin addressing a chronic shortage of affordable housing. Controversy erupted, however, when Met Life president, Frederick Ecker, announced that these units would be available for white families only. At the time, Moses pushed back hard against opponents of the exclusionary policy—engaging in his familiar name-calling, referring to them as "long-haired critics, fanatics, and demagogues"—and he "clung to the traditional rationale that racial integration was a risky investment and would deter private capital from urban redevelopment" (117). Years later, in attempt to shore up his legacy, Moses said that Ecker "needed more of the milk of human kindness and needed also to keep abreast of the times" (Moses 1956, 114)—but this was mostly damage control. Unfortunately, in the early 1940s, Moses's concerns about race and housing, as Biondi indicates, were broadly shared by the establishment. Northern liberals and southern segregationists colluded to ensure that many New Deal programs were "racially exclusionary," and the Federal Housing Administration and the Home Owner's Loan Corporation maintained racial maps of cities and "redlined" mixed or black areas (Biondi 2007, 117). When the agreement between the City and Met Life was challenged in court as a form of state-supported discrimination, both the New York Court of Appeals and the US Supreme Court ruled that no state action could be detected, due in no small part to Moses's clever wording of the 1943 amendments (118–119).

In fact, the Met Life incident points us beyond Moses's contention that racially integrated housing would not attract private capital, a pragmatic business concern, to deeper philosophical reservations he harbored about government attempts to promote racial integration. At the 1938 New York State constitutional convention, delegates drafted a civil rights amendment that targeted private discrimination in housing, education, and employment—to supplement the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause, which applied to state action only. According to Moses, the proposed amendment gave "cold chills" to the "more conservative and

responsible members of the convention," for it would have "emancipated the Negro from every chain and barrier and enforced complete equality between the whites and the blacks" (Moses 1940, 14). And why, one wonders, would this change in circumstances for people of color be such a travesty? Because, asserts Moses, "social equality is of slow growth and rests on mutual esteem and respect, not on force." The decision to "legislate tolerance by constitutional amendment or statute," he explains, would "unquestionably produce a violent reaction against these groups accompanied by all the evidences of bigotry aboveboard and below which go with such reactions" (15). Moses proudly reports that he knew exactly how to deal with this "ticklish" issue; he convinced the amendment's sponsors to insert the words "in his civil rights," a concept courts had construed narrowly, after the word "discrimination": "This … drew all the teeth of the original bill," he boasted, "and left it a harmless stump speech, flattering to powerful minorities, wholly ineffective against bigotry, and about as necessary as a second tail on a white bulldog" (17).

Moses's pronouncement about how social equality is achieved—that is, slowly, organically—is reminiscent of Justice Brown's majority opinion in the infamous 1896 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (163 U.S. 537), which announced the doctrine of "separate but equal." Homer Plessy, who was one-eighth black, occupied a seat in a train car reserved for white customers and was subsequently arrested for violating a Louisiana law requiring racial segregation in passenger trains. According to Justice Brown, Plessy's claim that the Louisiana law contravened the US Constitution "assumes that social prejudices may be overcome by legislation, and that equal rights cannot be secured to the Negro except by an enforced commingling of the two races. We cannot accept this proposition. If the two races are to meet upon terms of social equality, it must be the result of natural affinities, a mutual appreciation of each other's merits, and a voluntary consent of individuals" (O'Brien 2014, 1460). Justice Brown, and subsequently Moses, substituted a reliance on "natural affinities," "mutual appreciation," and "mutual esteem and respect" for legislative measures attempting to deal with racial discrimination. Absent from their assertions is any persuasive account of the institutional arrangements and social conditions necessary to nurture these beneficial sentiments. If the social landscape is racially partitioned and blacks and whites do not comingle; if they do not sit in the same classrooms; if they are not neighbors; how do Brown and Moses expect mutual esteem and respect, as opposed to rigid stereotypes, to grow? Moses's promotion of this abstract principle—that social, as

opposed to political equality, must evolve gradually—highlights a tendency within modernist thinking and design, that is, a setting aside of historical, institutional, and cultural contexts. In the case of Stuyvesant Town, this principle led to an exclusionary housing policy.

More egregious examples of Moses's refusal to consider concrete social conditions occurred during his time as head of the New York City Slum Clearance Committee. Admittedly, it is difficult to reconcile Moses's actions as slum clearance czar with the Burkean rhetoric one encounters in his *Working for the People*, where he waxes philosophical about the need to pay attention to local knowledge and to carefully handle the delicate fabric of communities: "In the field of physical planning of municipalities, a most important requisite is local knowledge. The planner must have his roots down deep in the community; he must realize that the results of experience can be applied only sparingly at home … Each community has its own peculiar problems; the conservation and reclamation of its natural attractions, and the maintenance of its unique flavor and character are at least as important as its modernization, standardization and streamlining" (Moses 1956, 64). Unfortunately for the residents of the East Tremont neighborhood in the Bronx, where Moses demolished 54 apartment buildings to make room for his Cross-Bronx Expressway, Moses's wrecking ball was more decisive than his words.

Many of the residents of East Tremont were Jews who had fled pogroms in Eastern Europe and Russia (Caro 1975, 851). Though the buildings themselves left much to be desired—"plumbing was bad, most did not have elevators"—they represented a clear step up from most tenement housing (854). Beyond the slightly better quality of the structures, what was most appealing about the neighborhood, what made it successful as a community, were a number of other key factors. For those residents working downtown, the subway, the Third Avenue El, was easily accessible from anywhere in the neighborhood. And there was also a miniature garment and upholstery manufacturing district around Park Avenue, offering decent jobs a mere ten-minute walk from home (851–52). East Tremont also offered an abundance of good shopping and good schools. Most important, as Caro explains, the neighborhood had been assimilating immigrants and launching them in a trajectory of upward mobility for over 100 years. According to Caro, this urbanizing" area

> [was] a place in which families from European farms or small villages could become accustomed to living in a city, where a common consciousness

> began to evolve, a man from County Cork learning that the families next door from County Mayo weren't really such a bad sort, a housewife from a Latvian *shtetl* learning that the woman she met at the market who came from the Kiev ghetto was someone she could talk with—a consciousness that translated itself into a feeling of belonging in the city … It had been a 'staging area,' a place where newcomers who had lived previously in America only in slums, successful at last in their struggle to find a decent place to live, could regroup, and begin to devote their energies to consolidating their small gains and giving their children the education that would enable them to move onward and upward—to better, more 'fashionable' areas. (856)

On top of all this, East Tremont was an integrated neighborhood. The Germans did not leave when the Irish arrived and, unlike the pattern in other parts of the city, neither group fled when African-Americans and Puerto Ricans moved in (857). But starting in 1948, when Robert Moses cut a swath across the neighborhood, razing buildings and dislocating their occupants, Tremont's fragile social system was shattered. Few other neighborhoods offered East Tremont's unique alchemy of opportunity and tolerance. With the city in the grip of a housing crisis, the Tremont dispossessed shared the fate of tens of thousands of others impacted by Moses's urban redevelopment projects: they slipped back into segregated slums (Ballon 2007, 102).

In an essay titled, "Essential Postwar Improvements," Moses explicitly addressed the affordable housing shortage (though not its racial implications) that urban redevelopment exacerbated, suggesting that redevelopment should go "step by step and block by block with public housing for the lowest income groups" (Ballon 2007, 102). Though little *new* public housing was built in tandem with his Title I projects, he did, in the 1950s, locate 12 of his 17 completed projects near *existing* public housing. Nonetheless, these public housing complexes did not have the capacity to absorb most of those facing eviction; Moses also blamed the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) strict eligibility requirements that "disqualified single parent families, immigrants and the unemployed" for the plight of those put on the street by Title I (102). It was also true that federal funds for slum redevelopment were statutorily separate from funding for public housing, and what little money Congress appropriated for the latter was woefully inadequate (Moses 1956, 117). In the end, however, none of these conundrums deterred Moses from clearing slums to make way for new roadways and other developments.

Ballon concludes that Moses viewed these "secondary effects"—"a housing crisis, resegregation and discrimination, and shrinking central-city housing options"—as the unfortunate constraints placed upon him by the funding guidelines of federal policy (113).

One of the tragic aspects of the East Tremont case is that much of the harm done to the community could have been avoided. In order for democracy to work as advertised, that is, for people to govern themselves, the system assumes that government officials must be responsive (within reason) to citizen concerns and, when those officials fail, that they will be held accountable. Unfortunately, responsiveness and accountability to citizens were not hallmarks of Moses's reign. Residents of East Tremont were initially relieved to discover that, by moving the Expressway just two blocks south, at least 1500 living units could be spared. Over a decade earlier, another group of residents (this time, Riverdale civic leaders) made a similar discovery when faced with Moses's West Side Highway proposal: by routing Moses's project over the extant New York Central railway line, the neighborhood of Spuyten Duyvil, Inwood Hill Park (the only remaining primeval forest in the metro area) and precious city waterfront could be saved (Caro 1975, 540–566). But, in both instances, the results were the same: Moses dug in his heels—stubbornly and arrogantly refusing to listen to concerns and valid arguments. In the case of East Tremont, the residents even created an official group, the East Tremont Neighborhood Association (ETNA), and lobbied politicians to protect them but, one-by-one, the Borough President James Lyons and even the Mayor, Robert Wagner—both of whom seemed initially sympathetic to the residents' concerns—caved in to Moses (864–870).

Moses eviscerated democratic constraints in large part by meeting demand for public works and, in the process of winning public favor, weakened the hand of his democratically elected (and therefore, theoretically responsive) patrons. Politicians are judged on their ability to deliver government services quickly and efficiently, and Moses, more than any other person in his day, got things done. Consequently, for a string of New York City mayors, he became the "go to guy." With each success, Moses made himself more indispensable and was able to leverage those concrete successes into new positions of power. At the peak of his career, Moses held nine different government portfolios (Caro 1975, 764). As head of major commissions, he dictated or heavily influenced appointments; thus, he could afford to skip public hearings or, at least ignore impassioned pleas from those whose lives were turned upside down by his projects,

because he always had the needed votes in his back pocket. The freedom his accumulated power afforded him allowed Moses to operate in a manner consistent with his long and deeply held beliefs about decision-making—at least decisions about public works and design—within a democracy. Specifically, he had little regard for the ideas of common people and the institutional and procedural mechanisms that were intended to give them a voice. Ballon and Jackson summarize his anti-democratic bent this way: "His mission was to modernize the metropolis and keep it strong, and he dismissed as a necessary cost of progress the damage inflicted by public works on neighborhoods and people. The problem is that Moses felt himself uniquely able to interpret the public good. Putting his trust in experts, he doubted the capacity of democratic methods to arrive at the common good" (Ballon and Jackson 2007, 66).

What the preceding paragraphs reveal are two, conflicting portraits of Moses: in one, he was a hero, an advocate for the common man and woman, who greatly expanded public spaces by taking on aristocrats and other private interests, providing access to and creating new parks, beaches and playgrounds; in the other, he was a despot in democratic garb, building a nearly impregnable fortress of power via his control of public authorities and commissions, which enabled him to ignore public outcry when his plans displaced citizens and destroyed neighborhoods. In short, Moses embodies the democratic ambivalence of modernist urban design, and while it is difficult to imagine today's New York functioning without Moses's elaborate system of bridges, tunnels, and highways, it is equally painful to consider the unnecessary injuries he inflicted on the community he claimed to love.

Notes

1. Statutorily, New York had limited the power of authorities by "setting a time limit on their bonds, a date by which each authority must redeem all its bonds, surrender control of all its facilities and go out of existence," but Moses, the master drafter of legislation, inserted new language into amendments to the Triborough Act, altering and therefore removing this bulwark (Caro 1975, 625).
2. A helpful contrast here might be Daniel Burnham, who, like Moses, was a great urban visionary and who profoundly altered the built environment one of America's greatest cities; in Burnham's case, the city was Chicago. Much of Burnham's 1909 Plan for Chicago, however, was never built,

largely because he needed the approval of the Chicago City Council and because he relied on the financial backing of Chicago's patrician class for the plan's development and marketing. Thus, there were many hands and minds between Burnham's vision and its implementation, people who could modify or veto parts of his plan (Smith 2007, 131). Not so Moses. His strategy, as we have seen, was to sharply minimize the number of hands and minds that could thwart his designs, and the public authority was one of his main tools.

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CHAPTER 7

Democracy and Civic Ecology: New Urbanism

Robert Moses was accustomed to getting his way, as was made clear in the previous chapter; however, when it came to his grandiose schemes for lower Manhattan, he met his match in a diminutive homemaker turned urbanist named Jane Jacobs, who deftly and successfully parried all of Moses's assaults on her neighborhood, Greenwich Village. Born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Jacobs made her way to New York City during the Great Depression, and, though she had no college degree or formal training, her writing skills and keen observations eventually landed her a job as Associate Editor at *Architectural Forum*. In 1955, Jacobs received a flyer from a group called the "Committee to Save Washington Square Park," which outlined Moses's plan to extend Fifth Avenue through the park (Paletta 2016). Washington Square Park "anchored the Village," notes Anthony Paletta, "offering 10 acres of green space to a steadily changing set of neighbors, from Edith Wharton to Bob Dylan. Henry James wrote in Washington Square of its 'rural and accessible appearance'—a quality that had not entirely dimmed by the 1950s. Moses, however, upon looking at the park, was convinced that the amenity it most sorely lacked was a four-lane road through its centre" (Paletta 2016). As Jacobs explains in her seminal work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Moses had set his sights on altering the park as early as the 1930s. An old carriage pathway had been converted into a roadway that conveyed drivers through the park, and Moses suggested closing the park to traffic, but he intended to compensate for this loss of access by significantly trimming the sides of the park to widen the perimeter streets, "encircling" the park with high

S.M. Roulier, *Shaping American Democracy*,
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speed traffic, a plan locals "christened 'the bathmat plan'" (Jacobs 1993, 470). The "new" plan, the one Jacobs became aware of from the flyer, called for a "depressed highway cutting" through the heart of the park that, when completed, would link a multitude of cars hurtling down from midtown to "a vast, yawning Radiant City and expressway which Mr. Moses was cooking up south of the park" (470). Jacobs and her neighbors were determined that their community would not fall prey to the machinations of Moses. Jacobs proved to be a savvy community organizer, activist, and media strategist. The resistance mounted by the neighbors to Moses's plan left him stammering at a public hearing, yelling that "[t]here is nobody against this—NOBODY, NOBODY, NOBODY but a bunch of … a bunch of MOTHERS!" (Paletta 2016). That ragtag bunch of mothers and other collaborators succeeded not only in killing the proposed highway through the park but closing the park, permanently, to all vehicular traffic, without any compensating loss to park acreage or widening of surrounding roads (Jacobs 1993, 470).

Nevertheless, Moses hatched new designs that would encroach on the Village. Shortly after the Washington Square Park battle had ended, for example, Moses's associates, under the auspices of the city's Housing and Redevelopment Board and its Planning Commission, designated a large section of Greenwich Village south of the park as "blight," and unveiled a plan to re-develop (i.e. raze and rebuild) the area. Jacob and her allies sniffed out the project leaders' "skullduggery"—their failure to follow proper procedure to condemn property—and took them to court, embarrassing the city and forcing it to abandon the plans (Paletta 2016). But the final, climactic battle was yet to be waged, for Moses had been dreaming about building a massive expressway, the Lower Manhattan Expressway, that would "tie up the loose ends of local roadways by extending Interstate 78—all 10 lanes of it—from the Holland Tunnel to the Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges" (Paletta 2016). The Expressway would slice a fatal path through SoHo and Little Italy, a densely populated area that happened to contain one of the world's most impressive collections of cast-iron architecture. According to Anthony Flint, author of *Wrestling with Moses*, "Hell's Hundred Acres—the proposed corridor for the Lower Manhattan Expressway—was home to companies that employed 12,000 people, primarily blacks, Puerto Ricans, and women, in roughly 650 small businesses and 50 larger industrial establishments," not to mention the demolition of about 400 buildings that housed approximately 2200 families (Flint 2009, 153, 169). In essence, the

project, dubbed "Lomex" (shortened form of Lower Manhattan Expressway), would place SoHo, Little Italy, Chinatown, and the Lower East Side on the sacrificial alter to make it easier for people traveling from Long Island to New Jersey to "bypass" the city (167). Once again, Jacobs built a diverse and impressive coalition to save the community—and Lomex, in spite of being killed-off and resurrected numerous times under several different mayoral regimes, was never constructed.

Jacobs' resistance to Moses's schemes should not be understood as simply a noble, maternal urge to protect her community and its sense of place, though that was surely part of her motivation. Transcending the particular battles to defend Greenwich Village, Jacobs developed a sophisticated and incisive critique of urban modernism as practiced by Moses and many others, not only in New York but in major cities across the country. She vividly describes the flotsam of modernist urban planning this way:

> Low-income projects that become worse centers of delinquency, vandalism and general social hopelessness than the slums they were supposed to replace. Middle-income housing projects which are truly marvels of dullness and regimentation, sealed against any buoyancy or vitality of city life. Luxury housing projects that mitigate their inanity, or try to, with a vapid vulgarity. Cultural centers that are unable to support a good bookstore. Civic centers that are avoided by everyone but bums, who have fewer choices of loitering place than others. Commercial centers that are lackluster imitations of standardized suburban chain-store shopping. Promenades that go from no place to nowhere and have no promenades. Expressways that eviscerate great cities. This is not the rebuilding of cities. This is the sacking of cities…
>
> …That such wonders may be accomplished, people who get marked with the planners' hex signs are pushed about, expropriated, and uprooted much as if they were the subjects of a conquering power (Jacobs 1993, 6–7).

Whereas in her estimation urban design should be viewed as an experimental science—dependent on close observation in order to adjust when a system showed signs of failure—her modernist enemies disregarded the "data," that is, the deteriorating social conditions in the nation's cities and, consequently, perpetuated the same failed policies. Modernist planners, she claimed, "have ignored the study of success and failure in real life, have been incurious about the reasons for unexpected success, and are guided instead by principles derived from the behavior and appearance of towns,

suburbs, tuberculosis sanatoria, fairs, and imaginary dream cities—from anything but cities themselves" (9). As we observed in the chapter on Olmsted, Jacobs paid attention to the smallest details of urban ecosystems. To cite our previous example, Jacobs pointed out that pedestrians are not automatically safe just because sidewalks are built but *only* when those sidewalks have "eyes" on them, preferably at all times of the day, something that happens only in a densely settled and tight knit neighborhood.

From her careful study of urban environments, one "ubiquitous" principle of urban design emerged, namely, "the need of cities for a most intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially" (Jacobs 1993, 19). Genealogically, the ideas of Jane Jacobs are central to the second word in the design movement known as "New Urbanism." Among other prominent urban theorists—such as Vincent Scully, Aldo Rossi, Camillo Sitte, and Léon Krier (Calthorpe 1994, xi)—Jacob's voice, especially her full-throated advocacy of the "ubiquitous principle" of mixed use, reverberates throughout new urbanist writings. Indeed, new urbanists attempt to reach back behind what they believe are the misbegotten experiments of modernism to revive and reformulate (not merely imitate) urban traditions that are more attuned to human needs. The word "urbanism," then, is an intentional signal that new urbanists seek continuity with these past, humane traditions of planning. Like Jacobs, the new urbanists joined the debate about the proper way to bring order to modern cities; however, as Todd Bressi notes, New Urbanism has also been "at the forefront of a fundamental shift in the paradigm that underlies urban planning," specifically, the "need to reform the sprawled metropolitan region, not [just] the congested industrial city" (Bressi 2002, 8). Thus, the new urbanist movement represents both historical continuity and discontinuity. The departure from the "tradition"—that is, the "new" in New Urbanism—is "the application of these [traditional, good design] principles in suburbia and beyond" (Calthorpe 1994, xi). Moreover, New Urbanism is neither, exclusively, an architectural nor urban planning movement; rather, it is best understood as a holistic and interdisciplinary assemblage of practices—architecture, historic preservation, transportation engineering, landscape architecture, and urban design (Bressi 2002, 8). And, finally, collaboration among these professions in the new urbanist movement aims not only to provide more habitable human spaces but also to protect the natural environment.

New Urbanism: History, Values, and Design Strategies

The genesis of New Urbanism can be traced to architect Peter Calthorpe's 1982 proposed plan for a rail corridor in Marin County, supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, in which he coined the term "transportation-oriented development" (or TOD for short), referring to walkable, mixed-use sites adjacent to transport, and to a series of design studios taught by Calthorpe, Daniel Solomon, and others at the University of California at Berkeley College of Urban and Environmental Design in the late 1980s, which sought to explore and elaborate upon Calthorpe's "pedestrian pocket" design concept (Katz 2002, 33–34). A symposium showcasing the work from these design studios, called "Remaking Suburbia," was held at Berkeley in 1988. In 1991, the Sacramento-based "Local Government Commission" (LGC)—originally a state agency founded by California Governor Jerry Brown to help municipalities address environmental challenges that eventually morphed into a non-profit when political winds in California shifted—was the catalyst for the first codification of a set of principles when it invited Calthorpe (and other like-minded architects) to provide some guidelines for a state-wide community planning initiative that could be adopted by the Air Quality Management District (Moule 2002, 21). Meeting in Davis, California, at the home of LGC director, Judy Corbett, Calthorpe, Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Stefanos Polyzoides, and Elizabeth Moule—the founding mothers and fathers of New Urbanism—authored what became known as the "Ahwahnee Principles," named after the lodge at Yosemite National Park where the LGC was scheduled to hold its conference. This precursor to the "Charter for New Urbanism" not only articulated design principles but schematically related these design principles "to various scales of endeavor: building, block, street, neighborhood, district, corridor and region" (21).

The outline of principles announced in Ahwahnee—and its scalar structure—provided a framework for future collaboration and research. The first meeting or "Congress" was held in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1993 and focused on the middle scale, that is, on the neighborhood, district, and corridor. It was organized by Duany and Plater-Zyberk. The second Congress occurred a year later in Los Angeles; it was organized by Moule and Polyzoides and thematized the smallest scale—the block, building, and street. A third Congress, hosted by Calthorpe and Solomon in San

Francisco, was dedicated to the largest scale, the region. Subsequent to the third Congress, the founders created a new, non-profit organization, the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU), and recruited Bruce Katz to be the organization's first Executive Director (Katz 2002, 36–37). In 1996, the fourth Congress met in Charleston, South Carolina. According to Katz, it was in Charleston that the CNU transitioned "from the more intimate, early years of the congress to the larger, more socially and politically active organization of today," and it adopted an "open admissions" policy for congress attendance (37). Most significantly, an official "charter" of New Urbanism was introduced and ratified in Charleston. Also, HUD (Housing and Urban Development) Secretary Henry Cisneros attended the fourth Congress and announced his agency's embrace of new urbanist principles for its HOPE VI public housing projects, lending credibility to CNU's claim that is was fully committed to urban infill and mixed income housing (37–38).

The nomenclature of the CNU is no accident. Early on, the founders of New Urbanism were aware that they were operating against the backdrop of a modernist planning paradigm whose philosophy was codified by an organization called CIAM or the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne*, founded in Switzerland in 1928 by Le Corbusier. As Andres Duany explains, "The fact that the Congress for the New Urbanism goes by the initials CNU has something to do with the prior success of CIAM—as does the fact that our meetings are called 'congresses' and have been numbered with Roman numerals as CNU I, II, III, IV and so on. These conscious choices reflect the effectiveness of that earlier effort" (Katz 2002, 34–35). By "effectiveness" Duany is referring to the successful dissemination and acceptance of modernist design principles—not to their impact, which Duany and the other new urbanists think have been disastrous. As described by Todd Bressi, the design template proposed by CIAM and its progeny led to "vast swaths of urban clearance and reconstruction in historically developed areas, new expansion along webs of freeways stretching further and further from the central city, increasingly large modules of development that resulted in bigger and bigger single-use, single-building type districts," creating urban spaces every bit as problematic "as the industrial city had been" (Bressi 2002, 8). The CNU, therefore, has appropriated the familiar language and organizational strategies of CIAM in the hope of undoing much of the damage inflicted by the latter.

There are at least four key values that animate the work of new urbanists. The first is the notion that design is not merely a decorative aspect of human community but profoundly influences its functioning on multiple levels—political, social, and economic. Duany puts it succinctly: "the physical design of the community directly affects human well-being" (Duany 2002, 27). The mounting human cost of sprawl and urban "renewal" demanded, the new urbanists believed, a new approach, one that resurrected the best practices of traditional place making and adapted them to new situations. Emphasizing the importance of design, however, does not mean that New Urbanism is necessarily guilty of environmental determinism. The Charter of the New Urbanism, for instance, explicitly states that "we recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework" (CNU 2016). In short, new urbanists argue that good design is a necessary—though not sufficient—foundation for healthy communities.

Second, when new urbanists talk about reconstructing the city, they have more in mind than architectural drawings and zoning ordinances. Their aim is to construct communities of "neighborly interests," to borrow a phrase from Polyzoides, communities of neighbors that possess vitality, seek just relationships, and are culturally rich precisely because they are places that are tolerant and inclusive (Polyzoides 2002, 19). Reflecting on the Charter of the New Urbanism, Elizabeth Moule observes that whereas "modern architecture and urbanism have enthusiastically embraced [the] compulsion for speed," the pedestrian-orientation of the New Urbanism deliberately attempts to slow us down, so we have time to appreciate aesthetic details and to connect with others (Moule 2002, 22–23). Speeding past housing blocks on a modern freeway, it is easy to miss the ways in which our built environment marginalizes various groups, such as the "underprivileged, children, the elderly," who rarely own cars and often lack access to public transport and affordable housing (23). New Urbanism, then, values inclusivity, consciously seeks to bring together people of "diverse ages, races, and incomes" (24). Without the cultivation of tolerance, however, inclusivity alone can turn dystopian. "Understanding the Other in society," claims Moule, "is critical to our future." She continues: "The warp and woof of history has been shaped by a clashing of difference; life is made from including the Other. In a global culture, we have more in common with the idiosyncratic and intimate details of life in

a Guatemalan jungle than we do with the base generalities of an airport in Frankfurt. But within the Modernist doctrine, internationalism threatens to kill the unique aspects of societies and cultures, even though nobody really lives the singular, generic life described by globalism" (24–25).

Nevertheless, it is not enough to nurture tolerance and inclusivity. These communities also need to be empowered, to have a voice in shaping their futures. In other words, they need to be filled with citizens—not just neighbors or residents. Conceding that democratic governance sometimes requires individuals to participate in "unpleasant" dialog, especially where there is deep disagreement, and that such an experience can be "infuriating," especially when progress is slow and incremental, Stefanos Polyzoides contends that the new urbanist movement, despite these difficulties and inconveniences, is committed to a democratic ethos and, for this reason, must seek popular support (Polyzoides 2002, 20). Polyzoides, one of the new urbanist founders, says that "all new urbanist projects, with no exception, are carried out in public." Because political decision-making, particularly in the American context of federalism, is diffused among many levels of government, with local governments largely controlling land use decisions, "the challenge of changing general plans and zoning codes means rallying citizens to espouse and support New Urbanism politically" (20). In the words of the Charter: "We are committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community, through citizen-based participatory planning and design" (CNU 2016).

Fourth and finally, while the preceding values have all centered on human flourishing, the Charter of the New Urbanism explicitly recognizes the symbiotic relationship between human communities and nature, affirms that there is a "necessary and fragile relationship between the two." Unchecked growth of the built environment can threaten the "agrarian hinterland and natural landscapes," notes the Charter, and since human communities are fully ensconced in and wholly dependent upon natural systems—"farmland and nature are as important to the metropolis as the garden is to the house"—environmental conservation and preservation are high design priorities of New Urbanism (CNU 2016).

Having surveyed the goals of New Urbanism, what design tactics does the movement propose to implement them? Though a comprehensive account of new urbanist design is unwarranted here, it is necessary to provide at least a few examples to illustrate how new urbanists' design strategies align with their stated values. We begin with the goal of building and fostering a community—not just an aggregation of residential

structures. Andres Duany, having thoroughly reviewed the best models of a neighborhood available—"the 'neighborhood unit' of the 1929 New York Regional Plan, the 'quartier' identified by Léon Krier, the 'traditional neighborhood development' (TND), and the 'transit-oriented development' (TOD)—found that, regardless of terminology, all of these plans prescribed a "limited" area "structured around a defined center" (Duany 1994, xvii). Like a cell's membrane and nucleus, a community, too, needs a center and boundaries. Notably, this basic structure also applies to the broadest scale addressed by New Urbanism, the "region," where UGBs or urban growth boundaries and open/public spaces play the de-limiting and centering roles (Calthorpe 1994, xi). Duany suggests that the distance from the center of a neighborhood to its edge should be a quarter mile, the distance that an average person could cover by foot in about five minutes' time (Duany 1994, xvii–xviii). These specifications clearly reveal the emphasis New Urbanism places on designing to human scale instead of submitting to the ubiquity of the automobile. For its part, the center of a neighborhood should be a public space, which "may be a square, a green or an important street intersection," and while some shops and workplaces may be centrally located, the "public buildings, ideally a post office, a meeting hall, a day-care center and sometimes religious and cultural institutions" occupy this important space (xvii). This civic architecture creates a public/private hierarchy: a good neighborhood gives ample room for individual choice (in housing type, for instance) and commercial pursuits; however, the emphasis placed on public space and public buildings reminds individuals that they are more than the sum of their parts, that they belong to a community. As the identity of a community becomes more visibly and architecturally "legible," to borrow a phrase from Elizabeth Moule, residents, in theory, will take more ownership of it—the first step toward citizen formation (Moule 2002, 25). Developing a community identity, then, dovetails with and undergirds the explicitly democratic and participatory processes—such as planning charrettes—employed by new urbanists.

Furthermore, communal integration—inclusivity and tolerance—is promoted, from a design standpoint, by offering a range of housing types to accommodate a full spectrum of incomes, "from the wealthy business owner to the school teacher and the gardener" (Duany 1994, xix). This pattern contrasts sharply with the income segregation common in most suburbs. To make housing affordable, to cite one example, "garage apartments" are permitted with "single-family houses." This arrangement

enables homeowners to generate extra income that may be needed to make the mortgage payments and supplies rental options for those wanting to live in a new urbanist development who could not otherwise afford to do so. Polyzoides intones, again, that the intentional design of new urbanist communities does not entail the naïve belief in "environmental determinism": this is not "the deterministic framing of humanity in a particular architecture" (Polyzoides 2002, 19). Nevertheless, new urbanists believe that their designs differ significantly from the template of suburban sprawl, where people are commonly separated by class and race and where the built environment is designed to facilitate automobile traffic and to ensure personal privacy. While new urbanist design cannot compel the formation of genuine community, its advocates would argue that the design elements listed above are much more conducive to "association by choice," more likely to be "places where people can freely generate a community of neighborly interests" (19).

Finally, as the brief section on the history of New Urbanism noted, environmental concerns were at the forefront of the movement from the very beginning. There are essentially four ways that New Urbanism attempts to promote environmental stewardship: siting consistent with natural topography, implementing growth-limiting strategies, decreasing automobile dependence, and promoting sustainable building practices. "Communities," Calthorpe observes, "historically were embedded in nature—it helped to set both the unique identity of each place and the physical limits of the community" (Calthorpe 1993, 25). Instead of consciously allowing local flora or a natural amenity like a harbor to lend a place its unique flavor, now human settlements are marked by a common set of eyesores and environmental pathologies, namely, "smog, pavement, toxic soil, receding ecologies, and polluted water…" (25). Owing philosophical debts to thinkers like Élisée Reclus, Patrick Geddes and to members of the Regional Planning Association of America (Clarence Stein, Benton MacKaye, Henry Wright, and Lewis Mumford), Calthorpe insists that nature should, once again, "provide the order and underlying structure of the metropolis":

> Ridgelands, bays, rivers, ocean, agriculture, and mountains form the inherent boundaries of our regions. They set the natural edge and can become the internal connectors, the larger common ground of place. They should provide the identity and character that unifies the multiplicity of neighborhoods, communities, towns and cities which now make up metropolitan

> regions. Preservation and care for a region's natural ecologies is the fundamental prerequisite of a sustainable and humane urbanism. (25)

It is this re-embedding of human communities in nature, allowing their contours and scale to be determined by natural features, their economies and resource use to be carefully integrated with natural systems like watersheds—that is suggested by New Urbanism (26).

New Urbanism's endorsement of UGBs or urban growth boundaries is also central to its environmentalism. Such boundaries "express the need to preserve nature as a limit to human habitat" (Calthorpe 1994, xvi). At a regional level, a high priority is placed on creating open space, which, Calthorpe points out, gives real material form to "ecological and conservation values" (xvi). Calthorpe cautions, however, that the built environment is a highly complex system and policies aimed at checking growth—if not carefully considered—can have the opposite effect. For example, some strategies, variously referred to as "managed" (or "slow" or "smart") growth, are often used by jurisdictions "seeking to avoid their fair share of affordable housing or the expansion of transit … extending and displacing the problem" (xiii). In order to limit growth without contributing to sprawl in more remote areas, a solid regional plan with tight controls needs to be in place. This would include, first and foremost, a strong commitment to urban infill projects and, if absolutely necessary, plans for "new towns" (with their own growth boundaries, environmentally sensitive placement, and commitment to open space) linked by transit to the center of the city (xiii).

It is when we move from the regional to the neighborhood level that arguably the most important component of New Urbanism's environmental protection strategy comes into view, for the geographically compact, densely settled, pedestrian and bike-friendly development—the core elements of new urbanist neighborhoods—are intentionally designed to drastically reduce car use and thus environmental abuse. 16.2% of all greenhouse gas emissions produced in the United States come from "light duty" vehicles—SUVs, pickup trucks, and cars (Sivak and Schoettle 2016)–and, as Matt Richtel notes in a *New York Times* article published on June 24, 2016, reducing tailpipe admissions is one of the best ways to fight climate change. Because new urbanist developments are pedestrian-oriented, compact and full of multiple services (workplaces, shopping, restaurants, and recreation) most people live within walking distance of their daily needs, sharply decreasing the number of car trips a person would otherwise take.

And, since the new urbanist neighborhood "focuses the required user population within walking distances of the stop" [light rail, bus or subway] it "makes transit viable at densities that a suburban pattern cannot sustain" (Duany 1994, xxviii). A new urbanist settlement pattern, then, reduces driving and its attendant CO_2 emissions and lessens demand for roadways and parking lots, thereby reducing public expenditures and toxic runoff into sensitive waterways.

Last but not least, at the smallest level, blocks and buildings, New Urbanism pushes its environmental agenda. One important goal for Moule and Polyzoides, the new urbanists most closely associated with this level of design, is for "individual buildings … to become ecologically sensitive in their use of materials and energy." For instance, "regionally proven methods of building and easily available local and recyclable materials are to be favored … [and] low-energy consumption and pollution-free operations must be pursued" (Moule and Polyzoides 1994, xxiv).

New Urbanism and Political Theory

According to urban planning scholar Cliff Ellis, "the foundations of the New Urbanism in political theory remain to be fully articulated" (Ellis 2002, 273). While this final section of the chapter does not aspire to offer such a "full articulation," it does investigate one new urbanist practitioner's attempt to provide a philosophical ground for the movement, namely, Peter Calthorpe's "philosophic ecology." He explains that basic principles of his theory can be gleaned from the field of ecology—"[n]ot the literal ecology which deals with natural systems and seems to stop just short of the human habitat—but a broader, more philosophic 'ecology' which teaches that diversity, interdependence, and whole systems are fundamental to health" (Calthorpe 1993, 11–12). Though there is much to admire in Calthorpe's philosophy, there are also gaps in his thinking. In the following pages an attempt will be made to clarify and supplement his theory and to offer corrections and critiques where they seem warranted.

One way to focus our inquiry would be to observe that Calthorpe, similar to other new urbanists, directs most of his attention to the problem of suburban sprawl[1]—reflecting on its origins, consequences and how it might be remedied. Consider, for instance, the following claim from Calthorpe, which both illuminates and obscures the character and impact of sprawl: "Our faith in government and the fundamental sense of

commonality at the center of any vital democracy is seeping away in suburbs designed more for cars than people, more for market segments than communities" (Calthorpe 1993, 16). Notice that Calthorpe not only *identifies* problems in the realms of urban planning and politics—to wit, suburban sprawl and a flagging civic life—he intimates that the two problems are *related*. Specifically, he implies that this relationship is one of "causation," though it is unclear which phenomenon is cause, which is effect. If the relationship is indeed one of causation—that is, if Calthorpe is not mistaking causation for correlation—it begs this question: does sprawl sap civic life or does democratic fatigue engender decentralized spaces? More needs to be said about this than Calthorpe offers.

Let us begin with the first proposition, namely, that suburbs contribute to the decline of democracy. According to Kevin Leyden and Philip Michelbach, new urbanists link suburbanization to "the privatization of space," which minimizes "public space and social interaction": "While not all suburbs are the same … many do attempt to intentionally minimize face-to-face interactions by doing away with sidewalks, parks, and by zoning shops, restaurants, and even schools and places of worship out of the neighborhood. Casual interactions, conversations or chance meetings … become highly improbable" (Leyden and Michelbach 2008, 243). When Calthorpe claims that "vital democracy is seeping away in suburbs," he implies, as Leyden and Michelbach summarize above, that a misshapen, suburban environment has sapped democratic life. Though Calthorpe supplies no specific evidence to support this claim, there are, in fact, studies that would seem to bolster his assertion. Whereas the early post-war suburban settlements were marked by high levels of civic participation—pace the writings of Herbert Gans (1967) and William Whyte (1956)—Robert Putnam explains that as "suburbanization continued … the suburbs themselves fragmented into a sociological mosaic, collectively heterogeneous but individually homogeneous, as people … sorted themselves into more finely distinguished 'lifestyle enclaves,' segregated by race, class, education, life stage, and so on" (Putnam 2001, 209). The proliferation of CIDs (common interest developments) and gated communities, starting in the 1980s, only accelerated this trend. While these homogeneous settlements might produce greater amounts of bonding social capital, there are concomitant civic deficiencies. For example, Eric Oliver found an *inverse* relationship between social homogeneity and political participation in the suburbs he studied. Oliver's data led him to conclude that homogeneity *lessens* social conflict and thus *creates fewer*

incentives for people to work collaboratively (Putnam 2001, 210). Furthermore, Putnam was able to quantify a "civic sprawl penalty" of roughly 20 percent on civic involvement, due largely to lengthy commute times (215). We will revisit the research in more detail below, but it appears there is some empirical support for the claim that a nexus exists between settlement type and the quality of civic life; specifically, auto-dependent suburbs appear to decrease neighborly collaboration and civic involvement, key ingredients for a healthy democracy.

Calthorpe also makes the opposite claim, namely, that "the rise of the modern suburb is in part a *manifestation* of a deep cultural and political shift away from public life" (Calthorpe 1993, 37; emphasis added). Here the argument is turned on its head. What was earlier the cause has now become the effect: an anemic civic life breeds suburbs. In Calthorpe's book this remains an assertion only. As it turns out, however, there is *also* evidence to support this proposition. For instance, one indicator of community or civic health is its openness to "difference"—ethnic, religious or racial. Lizabeth Cohen, in her book on post-war America, *A Consumers' Republic*, observes that race was a leading factor in post-war suburbanization. According to Cohen, a "steady influx of African-Americans to northern and western cities during the war, and the Second Great Migration out of the South that followed it, helped to motivate urban whites to leave" (Cohen 2003, 212). Cohen notes that, nationally, for every two non-whites who moved to an area, three whites exited; between 1950 and 1960, nine of the ten largest cities lost residents, while their metropolitan areas grew (212). In 1962, the director of Newark's civil rights agency mused that "the free enterprise system lurking in many American hearts has provided more moves to all-white suburbs" than decisions to remain rooted in community—notwithstanding a "billion words of love" that vainly tried to promote "the spiritual advantages of economic and integrated city living" (213). Cohen's argument is supported by Thad Williamson, whose work on sprawl we cited in the chapter on Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City. Williamson, recall, outlines how suburbanization "reproduces" and "extends" social inequalities, more specifically, how suburban affluence is causally linked to urban distress (Williamson 2010, 136). But sprawl, he argues, is *not only a cause* of inequality: it is *also an effect* (145). Instead of collaborating with others to solve community problems, suburban migration, he suggests, represents a different impulse: "The desire to live in a neighborhood with strong public goods and away from concentrated social problems stimulates a process in

which those with the means to do so move into economically privileged neighborhoods" (145). The phenomenon of white flight to the suburbs, in short, is a compelling piece of evidence for a narrowing of social interests to the economic and for the repudiation of an integrated, democratic community.

What can we conclude, then, about the relationship between sprawl and an emaciated public life? Significant regional differences probably render *a general question* about origins—of which came first, sprawl or civic enfeeblement—unanswerable. Overall, however, one can say that the relationship appears to be symbiotic: suburban developments, at least in some instances, *may be* a sign or symptom of a turning away from public life but their growth and influence on society further erodes civic community. One way to frame this is to say that Calthorpe's diagnoses suggest that Americans face a vicious cycle: people abandon community for "house fortress[es]," resulting in isolation; and "the more isolated people become"—that is, the "less they share with others unlike themselves"—the more fearful and suspicious they become (Calthorpe 1993, 37). And—we can close the circle for Calthorpe—the more fearful they become, the more they abandon community.

By intentionally designing housing that is not "fortress-like" but instead seeks to facilitate community interaction (e.g. by significantly reducing setbacks and making houses address the street and sidewalk, adding front porches, mixing uses and housing types, ramping up densities, etc.), Calthorpe's and other new urbanist projects will, in theory, minimize isolation and fear. "Building," we can say, is at the very core of his theory of social transformation. That is, Calthorpe designs and builds spaces that he hopes will interrupt the vicious cycle of sprawl (with its environmental costs) and civic decline and serve as models that can positively "leaven" the landscape, generating virtuous cycles in which the built environment preserves ecosystems and nurtures, rather than inhibits, civic commitment. If there is a "positive" correlation between sprawl and civic decline, then, presumably, there should also be a "positive" correlation between strategies to limit sprawl and improvements in civic life: more of the first will entail more of the second.

Calthorpe's new urbanist designs and those of his colleagues clearly are committed to reducing sprawl and bolstering community. What exactly, however, is his contribution to the goal of civic revitalization? Obviously, the "front line" battles of the effort to resist sprawl entail practical measures like revisiting zoning ordinances and traffic engineering guidelines.

Nonetheless, an even "deeper" need than challenging practices is to challenge the social and political *presuppositions* that keep delivering sprawl. Calthorpe's philosophic ecology does not include a direct and sustained argument against its alter ego—a political theory that mostly eschews an "ecological" or holistic view of human society. But the very fact that Calthorpe insists on an ecological approach to solving human problems, an approach that he says requires us to accept "interdependence" as a critical component of a healthy community, means that his philosophic ecology, at the very least, offers an implicit critique of "non-ecological" theories—the classic example being libertarianism. Indeed, it turns out that suburban sprawl is a landscape congenial to and often defended by many libertarians (e.g. Bruegmann 2005; Conte 2000; Cox 1999), in spite of the fact that sprawl continues to destroy habitat and dissipate precious energy resources. Unlike Calthorpe's philosophic ecology, libertarian political theory privileges human development over the natural environment and private wealth and property over the public weal (Hayek 1960, 1980). What is the key premise upon which a libertarian ideology and, by extension, the landscape of sprawl is predicated? The answer is methodological individualism, the opposite of philosophic ecology's principle of interdependence.

To reiterate, whereas Calthorpe's philosophic ecology propounds that humans are ensconced in complex, "whole systems (Calthorpe 1993, 11)," libertarian thinkers mostly reject this way of framing social life. For example, according to Robert Nozick, a representative libertarian thinker, individuals are entitled to possess anything they have acquired justly (via a Lockean-inspired labor theory of value) or anything that has been transferred to them justly, as a result of a contract or gift (Nozick 1971, 151). According to Nozick, society has no valid claim on or right to—through the mechanism of redistribution or regulation—any part of the individual's wealth and property "justly" acquired. In short, the underlying premises of Nozick's theory diverge profoundly from those found in Calthorpe's philosophic ecology. In Nozick's model, individuals are self-made men and women, who owe nothing to society as a whole; taxation is often characterized as forced labor (169). By extension, almost all attempts to regulate the use and disposal of private property, in the form of zoning ordinances and environmental laws, are considered infringements on the rights of property owners. In the rare event that gains are ill-gotten—through stealing or enslavement—Nozick argues that a principle of "rectification" would compensate victims; however, since he spends all

of one page in his classic *Anarchy, State and Utopia* discussing the theory of rectification, the vast majority of which is a litany of objections to perceived wrongs and an explanation of the difficulties associated with applying the said principle (152–53), it is difficult to imagine that Nozickean rectification would have any purchase in the real world.

For someone who espouses a philosophic ecology, by contrast, the notion that individuals are so "entitled" (Nozick's term)—that they own themselves or are somehow self-constituted—is nonsensical. Like most communitarians and civic republicans (see, for instance, Pettit 1997; Sandel 1998), the proponent of philosophic ecology would likely point out that individuals are speakers of a language (or languages), participants in a cultural tradition (or traditions), members of a family unit, and the beneficiaries of an education and a host of social services. Individuals are, in the idiom of Calthorpe's philosophic ecology, part of complex webs of interdependence that sustain them and to which they owe some obligations. Seen in this light, Nozick's and related political theories are predicated on flawed sociology *and* historical amnesia, that is, a convenient forgetfulness of the history of conquest and exploitation upon which our current distribution of property partially rests.[2] Again, this critique is only implicit in Calthorpe's work, but his philosophic ecology calls attention to and stands as an indictment of the radical individualism that undergirds and animates our sprawling landscape.

While Calthorpe may have offered, if only obliquely, a critique of individualistic social philosophies, his own theory, like every theory offered for public consideration, has to be scrutinized. Even if one were to conclude that his understanding of social life—his holistic approach—is more persuasive than some alternatives, one would still need to assess the *results* of New Urbanism, to move from theory to practice. Therefore, we need to question how successful New Urbanism, the design strategy attached to philosophic ecology, has been in ameliorating the problems produced by modernism and urban sprawl. Specifically, is there evidence that new urbanist developments are truly more public-spirited than other development types? Do new urbanist developments really pay environmental dividends?

In regard to the civic question, the answer, at first glance, would be affirmative. Recall the evidence we considered earlier that pointed to an emaciated civic spirit in suburban enclaves. It stands to reason that the new urbanist goal of reducing social homogeneity—the culprit, according to Oliver's study, that partly explained the lack of civic involvement—by

including a mixture of housing types and costs within each development would stop the civic hemorrhaging. Furthermore, Putnam was able to quantify a "civic sprawl penalty" of roughly 20 percent on civic involvement, due largely to lengthy commute times. As we have seen, New Urbanism attempts to reduce commute times by combining residential and work activities, shopping, and entertainment. Thus, in theory, the design of New Urbanism *should* diminish the civic sprawl penalty and promote civic involvement.

The goal of reducing social homogeneity, however, may be more difficult than the new urbanists initially believed, at least according to Emily Talen. To succeed, Talen suggests, New Urbanism will have to offer more than design solutions, more than a "physical shell of hoped for diversity" (Talen 2008, 77). One threat comes from gentrification. To the degree that new urbanists demonstrate the superior quality of life offered by their designs, the market will reward their efforts, pricing lower-income people out. As Talen puts it, "in a society where the market is highly revered, models of social justice easily mutate into models of affluence" (77). Margaret Kohn, in her critique of New Urbanism, cites several examples where the cheapest level of housing in a new urbanist development is significantly higher than the median home price in the surrounding area (Kohn 2004, 130). Another problem is that wealthy people are reluctant to move into developments that include affordable housing because of its associations with decreased property values, lack of safety, and underperforming schools. Moreover, if developments truly contain mixed income levels, new urbanists will need to work harder to "match" services to various constituencies: public transportation or day care, for instance, may be more important to poorer than wealthier residents (Talen 2008, 78). In sum, Talen argues that translating the social equity ideal of New Urbanism into reality will require moving beyond a preoccupation with design and attending to social policy and social institutions: "It will require uncomfortable alliances with social activists, patience with programmatic details, cultivation of institutional connectedness, and an astute understanding of process in addition to form" (78).[3] Complicating matters further, to address the gentrification issue raised above and to connect residents to needed services will necessitate some regulation of the private housing market and expenditure of public funds, all of which will alienate conservatives who may otherwise sympathize with the formal design aspects of New Urbanism (78).

In the next chapter, we will provide a more in-depth assessment of the various urban tableaus we have introduced—that is, suburbs (especially suburban sprawl), urban modernism, and New Urbanism—by carefully considering the empirical evidence that has been gathered on each. As a preview, it will be argued that empirical studies on New Urbanism show that some of its goals are being met—though not as quickly or fully as promised.

Beyond the civic question, what can we say about New Urbanism's environmental impact? To begin, it is important to observe that New Urbanism is often ridiculed for its nostalgic, moderate density projects nestled in suburban areas—pace the Kentlands or Laguna West (Ellis 2002, 269). This ignores New Urbanism's very explicit commitment to urban infill and a vast array of projects in urban cores. Still, according to Sander, the early new urbanist sites "tended to be exclusively 'greenfield' developments" and the "vast majority are still greenfield" (Sander 2002, 215). If this is true, then the new urbanist design principle of establishing sharper edges for communities (or UGBs [urban growth boundaries]) is undermined, and so is its goal of protecting natural resources (Calthorpe 1993, 73). New urbanist "use mixing"—of commercial, residential, and recreational types—was also intended to have a positive environmental impact by reducing dependence on automobiles, and there is some evidence for decreased automobile use in new urbanist developments. For example, a 2006 study by Jennifer Dill compared travel behavior in three communities in East Portland—Fairview Village, a new urbanist development, and two conventional subdivisions. Dill found that residents of Fairview Village do, indeed, "walk more and drive less than in conventional subdivisions" (Dill 2006, 68). Nevertheless, Dill noted that attitudinal factors (households in the new urbanist neighborhood owned fewer vehicles) and demographic factors (there were fewer children in Fairview Village, whose presence is positively correlated with vehicle miles traveled) also played a role (68). This study is encouraging, but it must be remembered that advocates for New Urbanism are rarely in total control of a region's or city's plan—making it difficult for new urbanist planners to guarantee adequate mass transit alternatives for residents or to deliver on promises that adequate retail and employment opportunities will be close at hand. However, without the serious curtailment of auto use, not only would the civic dividends of New Urbanism be left unpaid but also the resource conservation and carbon emission reduction dimensions.

In this final section, we have tried to better understand the political philosophy behind New Urbanism, at least Peter Calthorpe's articulation

of it. This has included a hermeneutically sympathetic attempt to fill out or sharpen some of his arguments, as well as an evaluation of some of the New Urbanism's implementation problems and weaknesses. A preliminary conclusion would be that, despite its tendency to oversell its designs and its need to constantly improve implementation, New Urbanism is still a better alternative than the status quo. To their credit, Calthorpe and other new urbanists approach planning with a set of explicit commitments to protect the environment, conserve natural resources, and improve civic health.

Notes

1. For a good description, see Thad Williamson's chapter, "Defining, Explaining and Measuring Sprawl," in his *Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship: The Civic Costs of the American Way of Life*. A shorthand definition would be "low density, automobile-oriented development on the perimeter of metropolitan areas" (Williamson 2010, 114). Another important work is Robert Bruegmann's *Sprawl: A Compact History* (2005).
2. In his book *Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship*, Thad Williamson provides several critiques of libertarian views as they relate to private property and sprawl. Here is a sample. First, he notes that property values are inextricably tied to the value of *public* goods and amenities; private property is not some free-floating entity: "holders of property near a public park, for instance, might be expected to enjoy a boost in the value of their holdings relative to comparable property located far away from such publicly generated amenities" (18–19). Second, using the work of Jonathan Levine, Williamson notes that sprawl has been generated by a number of governmental "interventions" (zoning laws, federal subsidies)—it is not simply the result of private preference. "The practical policy choice we face is not," Williamson argues, "between a supposed free market and a planned regime but between one form of planned regime and another" (21). And, finally, sprawl is not categorically similar to lifestyle and diet choices; it affects "not only the person making the choice but also everyone else presently in the vicinity, as well as those who will use the space in the future" (21).
3. Coordinating with social services and local non-profits is not something that is typical of every new urbanist development; however, the new urbanist HOPE VI public housing program (discussed in more detail in the next chapter) does encourage its grantees to do this. According the HUD: "HOPE VI did not call for building alone. New, revitalized HOPE VI sites are weaving positive ties among public housing residents, neighborhood associations and community institutions. In addition to housing, HOPE VI

sites are building new community centers to house and more closely coordinate the many supportive services that help make a working lifestyle achievable for those formerly dependent on welfare. New multi-service centers that house childcare, afterschool programs, computer labs, employment services, training, recreation, and healthcare are common at HOPE VI sites" (HUD 2002).

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PART IV

Design Portfolios: A Juried Competition

CHAPTER 8

Democratic Designs: A Multipronged Assessment

A major purpose of this book has been to introduce readers to a variety of thinkers whose approach to democracy has a discernably spatial orientation. And, since democracy itself is a multifaceted concept, the hope has been that viewing it through the lenses of various landscape traditions and design philosophies would enable us to better understand and appreciate its richness and complexity. Each spatial representation of American democracy—whether it be tethered to the agrarian or wilderness tradition, or whether it be related to an urban design tradition—casts a unique and compelling vision of American democracy and, simultaneously reveals political vulnerabilities and challenges. Beyond this task of constructing a spatial narrative of American democratic thought—beyond the efforts to critically interpret and explicate it paradigms—there was also a normative promise made that, as yet, has not been fulfilled, namely, the attempt to weigh and assess the claims of rival democratic visions.

Some of the thinkers we have discussed, for instance, Frederick Law Olmsted and the new urbanists, believe a true democracy should establish (and that its long-term vitality relies upon) a civically oriented community, and they construct the built environment to support that objective. By contrast, an architect like Frank Lloyd Wright embraces democracy because of the liberty it affords people to forge their own identity, and his Broadacres model supplies plenty of "elbow room" for individualism to flourish. In what follows we will attempt to evaluate the social impact of the individually oriented versus the civically oriented forms of American democracy by measuring the social impact of their affiliated built designs.

S.M. Roulier, *Shaping American Democracy*,
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Specifically, we will explore how our design models relate to four social measures that are closely aligned with democracy—social capital accumulation, non-discrimination, human capabilities, and environmental sustainability.

Social Capital

So how, exactly, do we define social capital? According to David Halpern, social capital consists of three components: "a *network*; a cluster of *norms, values and expectations* that are shared by group members; and *sanctions*—punishments and rewards—that help to maintain the norms and networks" (Halpern 2005, 10). To illustrate, Halpern uses something familiar, a neighborhood. Most of us know many of our neighbors, though the level of intimacy we share varies widely: some neighbors we have known for a long time and count as friends; others are mere acquaintances, people with whom we are on a first name basis but our contact is infrequent; others may simply be people we recognize and to whom we wave when we pass by. A neighborhood, then, can be a network, and its "density" depends on the intensity of the relationships within it—how well people know each other (10). Neighborhoods also have rules and expectations, usually unwritten, such as "helping our neighbor where possible, being courteous and considerate—avoiding making loud noise at night; keeping our property … in a good state" (11). And, finally, these rules and expectations are enforced and maintained by various sanctions. When a norm is violated, the offender can be informed directly, "such as through a disapproving glance, an angry exchange of words or even the threat of action … [but] the sanction can also be positive, such as praise for a helpful act or on how good new paintwork or a garden looks" (11). Finally, we can also distinguish between two basic types of social capital. "Bonding" social capital, for instance, is "inward looking" and fosters group or community solidarity, whereas "bridging" social capital is "outward looking" and facilitates "linkage[s] to external assets" (Putnam 2001, 22). The former offers mutual aid and assistance and is crucial for community resilience, while the latter provides members with access to resources and opportunities otherwise out of reach.

The intellectual roots of social capital can be discerned in a number of different thinkers, prominent among whom would be Alexis de Tocqueville, but in the contemporary period two sociologists—Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman—are credited with igniting interest in the concept, and

the political scientist, Robert Putnam, put social capital "decisively on the map" (Halpern 2005, 6–7). Given his discipline, Putnam was especially interested in the ways social capital appeared to support democratic forms of governance. In his groundbreaking study, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Putnam and several colleagues studied the performance of 20 (newly established in the 1970s) regional governments in Italy. The identically structured regional governments represented, in social science speak, the independent variable, while the divergent political cultures of the various regions were the dependent variables. What Putnam found was that some governments performed much better than others. Early hypotheses attributed the superior performance of certain governments to their advanced level of modernization or economic development. As Putnam explains, "wealth eases burdens, both public and private, and facilitates social accommodation" (Putnam 1993, 84). A problem emerged, however, because while wealthier regions *did* perform better, as predicted, and could be grouped into one statistical quadrant, the significant differences in performance "within" each quadrant were "wholly inexplicable in terms of economic development" (86). This led Putnam and his team to consider a second hypothesis. They observed that some regions could be characterized as "civic communities," meaning they were "bound together by horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation," whereas other, "uncivil" regions relied on "vertical relations of authority and dependence" (88). It turned out that the characteristics of "civil" communities correlated closely with better performing regions and *also* predicted performance disparities within the quadrant of wealthy regions.[1]

But why are civic communities positively correlated with government performance and efficiency? The straightforward answer is that civic communities—those possessing large stores of social capital—are better at solving the dilemmas of collective action. These dilemmas, Putnam observes, are not necessarily due to "malevolence or misanthropy," for even if people are inclined to cooperate with others "they can have no guarantee against reneging, in the absence of verifiable, enforceable commitments" (Putnam 1993, 164). According to Putnam, one possible solution is third-party enforcement, like one finds in Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Individuals agree to submit to the Leviathan's authority to ensure that others fulfill their legal obligations. The third-party solution, however, spawns more problems than it solves, for the Leviathan does not operate for free; it imposes considerable financial costs and, not least, often calls

for major sacrifices of individual liberty. Moreover, the problem of trust is simply transferred to a higher level. Under this arrangement, for example, what guarantees does the subject have that the third party itself is or will remain trustworthy? (165). Another option is to repair to what Robert Bates terms "soft solutions"—reliance on strong communal ties and trust, the characteristics of civic communities (167). Deploying the example of rotating credit associations—where individuals make monthly contributions to a common fund, enabling one person per cycle to access the whole amount to finance a larger project or purchase—and the management of "pool resources," such as a fishery or alpine meadow, Putnam, citing the work several others, showed that "reputational uncertainty and the risk of default are minimized by strong norms and by dense networks of reciprocal engagement" (168). Thus, social capital—with its shared norms, networks of reciprocity, and informal rewards and sanctions—enables governments to have a "lighter touch." In practical terms, it makes it possible for police to "close more cases when citizens monitor neighborhood comings and goings," for child welfare departments to keep families in tact where "neighbors and relatives provide social support to troubled parents," and for public schools to instruct students where "parents volunteer in classrooms and ensure that kids do their homework" (Putnam 2001, 346). Social capital matters profoundly in a society committed to democratic self-government instead of authoritarian control.

The next step is to examine the relationship between our various design models—Olmsted's public spaces, "Broadacres"/suburban sprawl, urban modernism, and New Urbanism—and social capital. Since we have established the importance of social capital to democratic forms of government, attending to this indicator will aid us in our quest to evaluate which type(s) of design seems to best support democratic life. To begin with Olmsted, recall Margaret Kohn's contention that it was the strategies of the generation of progressive reformers that *followed* Olmsted, Jane Addams efforts at Hull House in Chicago being emblematic, that were *more* likely to produce social solidarity and human development than Olmsted's parks. If we borrow some of the terminology that was introduced above, we can say that the group activities offered by settlement houses like Hull House—for example, participation in the arts, basic skills courses, service projects—engendered the "bonding" form of social capital. Additionally, the fact that the settlement house movement intentionally brought together people from both privileged and impoverished backgrounds increased chances that the latter would be connected to

resources and networks that were previously inaccessible; that is, "bridging," not simply bonding social capital, was likely being accumulated. By contrast, we noted that the success of Olmsted's physical design strategy in promoting fraternity, one of Olmsted's stated goals, was less certain. As discussed more thoroughly in the Olmsted chapter, studies on "contact theory" are divided on whether people's views of strangers and their attachment to them can be achieved through mere copresence in a public space.

Whether one takes a skeptical or optimistic view of the impact of social contact, most would agree that the kind of idealized experience Olmsted describes of people strolling through New York's Central Park—with "evident glee in the prospect of coming together, all classes largely represented [and] … each individual adding by his mere presence to the pleasure of all the others, all helping to the greater happiness of each" (Olmsted 1997, 186)—falls short of building social networks, of piling up bonding or bridging capital. Producing or solidifying civic norms, however, is a different issue. Olmsted's nineteenth-century New York City was (as it continues to be today) highly stratified. In the workplace and among New York's residential spaces, there was a hierarchical order, but in the park people from all walks of life shared the space equally. Whatever ideological beliefs people possessed that framed their view of the others they encountered—whatever stereotypes and biases they harbored—were likely to be challenged by the simple observation of common human gestures, holding the hand of a child, for instance, or by the civic comportment maintained by the vast majority of individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, or gender, who inhabited the public space. This book argues that community-oriented spaces, like Olmsted's parks, can foster civic virtues of tolerance, can diminish suspicion and are a potent reminder that individuals share a world with others. These are important civic norms and values and should not be lightly dismissed. At a minimum, we might say that these Olmstedian spaces are like civic vestibules that can help to lay the critical groundwork for thicker and more enduring social networks.

The same could be said for many of Robert Moses's modernist infrastructure projects. As important as Olmsted is in the annals of American landscape architecture and planning, Moses's sheer output eclipses Olmsted's. As we noted in the chapter on modernist planning, Moses built 69 new parks in New York City in 1934 alone and opened 11 new swimming pools in the summer of 1936—one per week. Similar to Olmsted's parks, Moses's pools and parks dramatically increased public

space in the city and, just as we suggested on behalf of Olmsted's designed spaces, it is conceivable that Moses's also eroded barriers between working class men and women from different ethnicities, and allowed persons from different socioeconomic strata to intermingle—though more likely in parks than pools. It is equally probable, however, that if any stereotypes of strangers were discarded in Moses's public spaces—or if greater tolerance was promoted among city residents—this was more an indirect or *secondary* effect of Moses's public works, not the *primary* purpose, as it was for Olmsted, who was troubled by the disappearance of a sense of communal belonging and social fraternity. As we learned earlier, Moses was unwilling to move the planned path for his Cross-Bronx Expressway a mere two blocks in order to save the East Tremont neighborhood—one whose success in assimilating new immigrants and integrating people from various races and ethnicities was probably unsurpassed—and he labored vigorously (though ultimately failed) to ram his Lower Manhattan Expressway through Greenwich Village, one of the oldest and most culturally significant communities in New York City. These examples and others demonstrate that promoting communal bonds and social networks, that is, building social capital, took a decisive back seat to the implementation of Moses's grandiose designs. In short, any social capital that was built with the help of modernist designs was always at risk of being demolished by a wrecking ball.

Though we do not possess survey data about civic attitudes from residents who lived in East Tremont or Greenwich Village during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s—in order to do a comparative analysis of the impact of Moses's public works on their communities—nor from park visitors during Olmsted's day, we do have empirical evidence available from studies like the DDB Needham Life Style Survey (1975–1999), the Social Capital Community Benchmark Study (SCCBS 2002, 2006), and other more targeted studies that can help us measure social capital and other civic indicators for contemporary suburban sprawl and new urbanist communities. Having considered Olmsted's public spaces and Moses's modernist projects, we now turn our attention to suburban sprawl and analyze its relationship to social capital. The most authoritative source is Thad Williamson's excellent study, titled *Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship*. Relying on data from the Social Capital Community Benchmark Study (SCCBS 2002), conducted by the Saguaro Seminar at Harvard University, Williamson hones in on a number of sprawl-related variables—for example, neighborhood age, automobile dependence, and tract density—and

analyzes their impact on a variety of "informal" social capital and non-political social activities, for example, membership in clubs, playing team sports, or attending parades (Williamson 2010, 95). What he finds is that, in general, suburbs, "even sprawling suburbs, appear to be doing minimally, if at all, worse than cities in producing these *general* forms of social capital" (96). The one caveat is the negative impact of a key sprawl variable, commute time: it seems to be inversely related to social capital. Putnam made the same observation, noting that "the car and the commute … are demonstrably bad for community life"; specifically, the evidence indicates that "each additional ten minutes in daily commuting time cuts involvement in community affairs by 10 percent" (Putnam 2001, 213). Putnam postulates that spending more time stuck in traffic exacts a heavy opportunity cost, leaving people with less time to interact with friends and neighbors. Another factor may be that long commutes disrupt social "boundedness"—that commuting time is "a proxy for the growing separation between work, home and shops," especially as compared to earlier decades when social capital was abundant in America and more people lived in "well-defined and bounded" communities (214).

Williamson deepens his analysis of sprawl by considering other groupings of civic indicators—such as political consciousness and various forms of political participation. He discovered that while sprawl had no effect on people's level of general political interest, it *did* impact their basic knowledge of politics (e.g. whether a person could identify his/her United States' senators) and their practice of reading a newspaper. In regard to political knowledge, Williamson concluded that "the cumulative effect of sprawl-related variables is [even] larger than that of homeownership" (Williamson 2010, 225). In spite of the fact that suburbanites tend to have higher rates of homeownership—and that homeownership is often positively correlated with civic involvement and interest—the sprawl effect is potent enough to neutralize homeownership and to be a net drag on political knowledge.

Beyond political consciousness, Williamson also considers low- and high-intensity political participation. Low-intensity activities would encompass activities like voting, attending public meetings, or signing a petition—activities that take relatively little time or effort. While it turns out that sprawl's effect on low-intensity political activities is negligible, its impact on high-intensity political activities is quite significant. Williamson classifies four activities as requiring higher levels of involvement: membership in a group involved in local reform; membership in a political

organization; participation in a march, demonstration or boycott; and attendance at a political rally (Williamson 2010, 227). He reports that for each of the following sprawl variables—suburban residence, residence in a more car-oriented place, and residence in a newer neighborhood—participation in higher-intensity political activities is correspondingly low (228). Williamson summarizes his findings by saying that "whereas sprawling related features in general have only a modest effect on abstract interest in politics and lower-intensity forms of political participation (voting and attending public meetings), these features do appear to affect citizens' basic political awareness and their likelihood of engaging in higher-intensity civic participation to a quite a significant degree" (240).

Political awareness and political participation, at least in regard to high-intensity forms, are both attenuated in sprawling places; these deficits undermine civic culture in America. Nonetheless, the picture is more complex. Despite the disadvantages of sprawl highlighted above, it is positively correlated with trust of neighbors, a very important part of civic life. In order to gauge social trust, Williamson focused on six separate trust-related questions on the SCCBS. What he found was that "persons living in lower-density, car-dependent suburbs regard their neighbors as substantially more trustworthy than do persons living in dense, transit-intensive cities" (Williamson 2010, 161). In light of the connections between social capital and democracy articulated above—the notion that trust is a lubricant that facilitates social cooperation and diminishes obstacles to governance—this finding is significant. The reason for this heightened neighbor trust, however, may be due to the "privatistic" qualities of suburbs, that residents will likely have "fewer involuntary, unwanted social interactions…" (157).

As Tocqueville observed long ago, American individualism inclines people to withdraw into relatively closed, intimate circles of friends and family—engendering a cocoon effect that nurtures trust but not necessarily trust that pays civic dividends. Indeed, the "downside" of neighbor trust in suburbs is powerfully illustrated by Williamson's discovery that *social intolerance* was the opposite side of the suburban-neighbor-trust-coin. In his analysis, Williamson deployed three measures of tolerance: likelihood of having a personal friend who is gay or lesbian (among all respondents) or African-American, Asian, or Hispanic (among white respondents); hostility toward immigrants; and support for book censorship. People in urban environments are more likely to have a friend with a different sexual orientation or from a different race. Of course urban environments tend

to be more diverse already—but they may be diverse precisely because they are more welcoming (Williamson 2010, 163). As one moves further from an urban area, Williamson reports, support for removing potentially offensive books from library shelves increases, and "among respondents who are white and/or a college graduate (some 79% of the sample), residence in newer neighborhoods and residence in more car-dependent areas are each strong predictors of increased hostility to immigrant rights" (163).

Williamson turns to the work of David Brain to help make sense of the complexity of the suburban trust-tolerance nexus, where Brain distinguishes between "community" and "civility," the latter referring to "interaction and cohabitation with strangers" (Williamson 2010, 220). Brain writes that the fracturing of society is not primarily seen among persons who share intimate relations but "our relations with everyone else, with strangers … [and what is worrying about this] is the erosion of meaningful public space by suburban development patterns (with their emphasis on the parochial communities at the expense of what comes between) is part of what has become a kind of trained incapacity for public life" (cited in Williamson 2010, 220; Brain 2005).

Perhaps different spatial priorities, embodied in the design principles of New Urbanism, for instance, can begin to broaden people's social awareness and retrain them for the demands of citizenship in a democratic society? Are these assumptions of the advocates of New Urbanism correct? The research so far has yielded mixed results, though the results have provided, on balance, reasons for optimism. A brief sample will serve as illustrations. Promising outcomes, for example, were recorded by the architectural firm, Looney Ricks Kiss, and by Hollie Lund and Kevin Leyden. In 2002, a study by the firm Looney Ricks Kiss compared Harbor Town, a new urbanist-inspired development close to downtown Memphis, with Riverwood Farms, a suburban development which was built around the same time, located approximately 30 miles away. In this head-to-head comparison, Harbor Town (the new urbanist development) was the decisive winner: "Slightly over a quarter of Riverwood residents reported a lack of neighborhood feeling (26 percent) versus fewer than 5 percent of Harbor Town respondents. One quarter of Riverwood respondents felt 'isolated from others in their community,' significantly higher than the 15 percent who felt isolated in Harbor Town. Harbor Town residents [also] had larger social networks among neighbors…" (Sander 2002, 221). In another 2002 study, Hollie Lund attempted to answer the question

whether pedestrian-oriented developments are associated with a greater sense of community than automobile-oriented developments by comparing two neighborhoods in Portland, Oregon—one was a traditional neighborhood (TN) and the other a modern suburban neighborhood (MSN) (Lund 2002, 302). Using a Psychological Sense of Community (PSC) scale as a tool, Lund found a statistically significant higher level of "sense of community" in the traditional neighborhood (308). Finally, a study published in 2003 gathered data on social capital from a wide variety of neighborhood types in Galway, Ireland, including traditional, older mixed use, pedestrian-oriented, and modern car-dependent. The principal investigator, Kevin Leyden, reported that residents living in "walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods are more likely to know their neighbors, to participate politically, to trust others, and to be involved socially" (Leyden 2003, 1549). A more ambiguous conclusion, however, was drawn in a study from 2001. Barbara Brown and Vivian Cooper studied a new urbanist development about ten miles outside Salt Lake City and compared it to a more traditional suburb nearby. On the one hand, the new urbanist residents showed a statistically higher level of "neighborliness"—defined as "knowing neighbors, borrowing from neighbors, visiting, speaking and socializing with neighbors, watching neighbors' homes and expressing a willingness to improve the neighborhood"—but, on the other hand, these same residents demonstrated *no* statistically significantly higher "sense of community," as "measured on a twelve item scale," including such indicators as "shared emotional connection" or "needs fulfillment" (Sander 2002, 220).

As Thomas Sander explains, one problem with the positive results of the Looney Ricks Kiss study—and, by extension, of the others cited above—is that they could be at least partly accounted for by successful marketing campaigns that attracted *already* civic-minded people to Harbor Town. Indeed, Sander contends that evidence for a positive civic impact of new urbanist developments is not yet compelling, largely because of such "selection effects" (Sander 2002, 224). Moreover, the picture is further clouded when we consider the changes to new urbanist developments over time. In a study published in 2016, Cabrera, Scholz, Hobor, and Lizardo found that, over a nine-year period, from 2001 to 2010, social capital declined in Civano, a new urbanist development in Tucson, Arizona. Their results, they concede, are not consistent with other studies that reported an increase in social capital over time (Cabrera et al. 2016, 9). Possible external effects noted by Cabrera et al. were the emergence of social media

in this time period, as well as the Great Recession. There was also perceived crowding, as the neighborhood grew rapidly from 91 to 539 residents (10). Still the results point to the adverse impact of demographic changes over time. The question, in other words, is what happens when early adopters, who are usually more ideologically committed to the principles of New Urbanism, get replaced by new comers who do not share their views? The authors frame the dilemma this way: "… subdivisions, such as Civano, that are initially successful in creating thriving communities often end up with higher market valuations than their standard suburban counterparts. Consequently, they have to contend with less ideologically committed residents moving into their communities who are not looking for social capital or sustainability, but for a desirable neighborhood that will maintain high property values" (11). The problem, as Cabrera et al. put it succinctly, is how to successfully integrate "standard" residents into "non-standard" communities (11). The *hope* of new urbanists, of course, is that the design elements of their developments will influence these newcomers' habits of neighboring.

Race, Space, and Misrecognition

Though human identities are partly constructed by subjects rehearsing key narratives and telling stories, Clarissa Rile Hayward argues that storytelling is not the exclusive or even primary way that identities get *reproduced*. Instead, identities are also reproduced by "*institutionalizing* those stories: by building them into norms, laws, and other institutions … that give social actors incentives to perform their identities well. People reproduce identities, in addition, by *objectifying* identity stories: by literally building them into material forms … that social actors experience with their bodies as they engage in practical activity" (Hayward 2013, 2). In *How Americans Make Race*, Hayward is interested in the contribution of the built environment to the construction of racial narratives and identities. Hayward reminds her readers that in the nineteenth century race was believed to be biologically rooted, that there were distinct and permanent racial types, and that these types were hierarchically ordered, with blacks occupying the bottom rung (53–54). With the Great Migration, starting around the end of WWI, and abetted by the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924 that radically decreased the number of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, African-Americans were the numerically largest group moving into Northern and Midwestern cities (49–50).

When they arrived in Detroit, for example, they were met with discriminatory practices that kept them "entrapped" in the housing stock "most in need of ongoing maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation" (Sugrue 2014, 34). The problem was that blacks—generally given the lowest paying and dirtiest jobs—had less disposable income to spend on home improvement, and loans for home renovations were rarely given to people of color. The predictable result was that the physical structures in these black ghettos deteriorated further; nonetheless, though blacks did not choose these areas, and though various forms of economic disadvantage made it nearly impossible to improve their surroundings, these "decaying neighborhoods," Thomas Sugrue observes, provided "convincing evidence to white homeowners that blacks were feckless and irresponsible and fueled fears that blacks would ruin any white neighborhood that they moved into" (36). In short, as Hayward contends, the nineteenth-century paradigm of biologically determined racial types and ranks was supplemented by a very specific narrative of character deficiency—putatively verified by residing in poor-quality housing—that undergirded segregation (Hayward 2013, 54).

By the 1940s, however, the scientific rationale for asserting that race is biologically rooted was facing serious challenges. Nevertheless, *before* the narrative was fully discredited, notes Hayward, it had been "built into the American urban and suburban fabric," allowing it to "live on as a kind of collective 'common sense'" (Hayward 2013, 58). In reality, the racially partitioned landscape that emerged and endured was the result of a mosaic of governmental policies and private decision-making. Racially restrictive covenants, prohibitions (inscribed in property deeds) on conveying property to non-whites, were enforced in many states until the Supreme Court invalidated the practice in the landmark 1948 case, *Shelley v. Kraemer*. Nonetheless, restrictive property deeds continued to exist and were "socially" enforced (i.e. without the assistance of state action) by real estate agents steering African-American buyers away from white neighborhoods and, when that failed, by threats to the person and property of black buyers, issued and acted upon by determined white neighbors. This informal regime of restrictive covenant enforcement was not seriously addressed until the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Even more troubling, the national government did "lasting damage" by validating—by giving its "seal of approval" to—racially discriminatory lending (Jackson 1985, 217). The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was created by the National Housing Act of 1934, and its purpose was to encourage private

sector home building, primarily through insuring long-term mortgages made by private lenders (203–204). Then, after passage of the 1944 GI Bill, the Veterans Administration—in order to facilitate housing of 16 million returning soldiers after the Allied victory in WWII—embarked on a similar program. Both agencies, before guaranteeing any loan, required an "unbiased professional estimate" of the appraised value of the property, which, in turn, was based on a tripartite assessment of the quality of the property itself, the borrower and the neighborhood (207). The racial composition of the neighborhood in which a property was located was, it turned out, a significant factor in determining its value. Specifically, the FHA's Underwriting Manual from 1939 expressed concern about "inharmonious racial or nationality groups" and sternly warned that, if property values in a neighborhood were to remain stable, "it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes…" (208).

Furthermore, in order to analyze the loan worthiness of a particular area, the FHA relied on the notorious Home Owners Loan Corporation's (HOLC) rating system. According to Kenneth Jackson, the HOLC based its analysis on the assumption of "ecological" and "socioeconomic" change (Jackson 1985, 198). Deterioration is inevitable, and, in regard to housing, this resulted from "increasing age and obsolescence of the physical structure" but also included purported social decline, in the event that housing fell into the hands of lower-income families and "undesirable elements," that is, non-whites (198). Indeed, the HOLC created a formal rating system that included four categories of quality—ranked from the first or top grade to the fourth or lowest—with a corresponding letter (A, B, C, D) and color (green, blue, yellow, and red) scheme. FHA officials, Jackson writes, "evinced a keen interest in the movement of black families and included maps of the density of black settlement with every analysis. Not surprisingly, even those neighborhoods with small proportions of black inhabitants were usually rated Fourth grade or 'hazardous'" (201). Consequently, almost no FHA loan guarantees were provided to fourth grade or red areas; this discriminatory practice came to be known as "redlining." Finally, since African-Americans could not get traditional loans, they had no other option than to turn to more predatory financing schemes. For a large down payment and an agreement to pay extortionate interest rates, blacks could obtain "land contracts" from speculators. The latter held onto the title until the property was paid off, preventing the buyers from building equity. In the event of a default, speculators would

immediately evict and start the exploitative process with a new buyer (Sugrue 2014, 196).

This embedding of racial discrimination into the fabric of the built environment can be expressed as a perverse syllogism: certain spaces in America are characterized by poverty and crime; black people, predominantly, live in these places; therefore, black people are welfare dependent and criminals. As Hayward puts it: "the concentration in 'black places' of joblessness, of poverty, and of a host of social problems that accompany concentrated poverty transformed what were, in a causal sense, collective problems into—both in practical effect and in popular consciousness—'black problems'" (Hayward 2013, 45). The racialization of place (the black ghetto) and the racialization of social problems (as black problems) have profound implications for our current study. While there may be no consensus about the degree of material equality that *should* obtain in American democracy—nor any policy consensus about *how* greater equality might be achieved in the future—a commitment to at least formal equality, as attested by documents ranging from the Declaration to the Fourteenth Amendment, is accepted as a hallmark of our democracy. Yet the social history we have been tracing—and the congealed, material forms it has taken—undermines not only efforts to improve material conditions in America but also the formal equality to which we give lip service.

One way to conceptualize this threat to civic equality, aggravated by the spatial practices outlined above, is to talk about the failure of recognition and the diminution of group status. According to Charles Taylor, at least since the end of the eighteenth century the ideal of "authenticity," the notion that each person has a unique identity, to which he or she must be "true," has been an important moral feature of our social world (Taylor 1994, 28). This identity, however, is not something that persons can generate alone. Building on the work of Hegel, Mead and Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1982; Hegel 1977; Mead 1934), Taylor argues that our identities are constructed dialogically—are fleshed out and negotiated with the help and feedback of others (34). This dependence on others, however, creates vulnerability. As Taylor explains: "[I]nwardly derived, personal, original identity doesn't enjoy this recognition *a priori*. It has to win it through exchange, and the attempt can fail" (35). That is, recognition can be withheld or, what is reflected back to the person, can be distorted—a form of "misrecognition." To understand how this operates, consider the example of a young African-American woman living in a "black space"

whose supportive parents, teachers, and civic mentors tell her stories of black accomplishment and of the possibility of reaching her dreams through hard work and determination; however, this positive story is contradicted, daily, by the dominant racial narrative—of black people as "nobodies," as Martin Luther King once put it, as people unworthy to own homes or be counted as trusted neighbors—that lives on in the *material* form of her economically, socially, and physically decaying neighborhood. Obviously, she has access to more than this bad narrative, but as Hayward argues, narratives compete with each other, and "once such a [dominant] narrative has been institutionalized and objectified … it works as a frame to ordinary stories…" (Hayward 2013, 40). In Taylor's idiom, this constitutes a denial of recognition: the dominant narrative, imbricated in the built environment, misframes or distorts her identity. At stake is an individual's sense of dignity, a validation of her personhood.

And it is not simply the quest for recognition of individuals but also of groups that can be put in jeopardy. Nancy Fraser, in her Tanner Lectures, emphasizes that nonrecognition constitutes a "status injury"—a lessening of a group's social standing, apart from any specific, intersubjective exchange in which one party is the recipient of an indignity (Fraser 1998, 25). Whereas an example of socioeconomic injustice would be "exploitation"—and occurs when the fruit of a person's labor is taken without proper compensation—a "cultural or symbolic" injustice is perpetrated where there is one or more of the following: "cultural domination…; nonrecognition (being rendered invisible by means of the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretive practices of one's culture); and disrespect (being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or everyday life interactions)" (Fraser 1997, 13–14). Arguably, the racialization of an unequal and segregated built environment—what Hayward refers to as the construction of "black spaces" and their role in constructing black identity—is bound up with all three forms of status injury Fraser identifies, significantly diminishes a group's standing in a community. Because, as Taylor declares, "equal recognition is … the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society" (Taylor 1994, 36), acknowledging and attempting to remedy the detrimental impact of a racially biased built environment, on both individuals and groups, is critical.

Throughout this study, we have been concerned with the ways in which physical space, landscapes and urban designs, either support or undercut democratic attitudes and values. One of those values is civic equality.

Staying with our focus on race, how do the design philosophies we have encountered in our study fare in this regard? Do they shore up civic equality or do they contribute to discrimination and misrecognition? To begin with urban modernism, Susan Fainstein observes that large American cities faced competitive pressure in the mid-twentieth century from suburbanization and aging infrastructure (Fainstein 2011, 149). The Federal Housing Act of 1949, especially Title I, was passed to help cities tackle some of these problems. As we saw in our chapter on Robert Moses, this federal largesse was yet another potent tool at Moses's disposal as he sought to re-make New York's urban landscape. Well before the 1949 Act, however, Moses was engaged in urban renewal. One project that illustrates Moses's role in the process of the racial segregation of American urban spaces was the 1943 private-public venture between the city of New York and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Seeking to address a serious housing shortage, Met Life and the city agreed to build Stuyvesant Town, a massive development containing thousands of apartments to house veterans and their families (Biondi 2007, 117). As discussed in our earlier chapter, when Met Life President Frederick Ecker decided that the units would be available to white families only, Moses sprang to Ecker's defense, making the argument—common during the period of urban renewal—that it would be impossible to attract private capital to finance development projects in cities if those plans included the risk factor of racial integration (117).

As Title I—or "Slum Clearance"—money became available starting in 1949, city planners all over the country, not just Moses and his allies, targeted blighted areas for demolition, imposed their grand schemes of order on their cites, and made little provision for the communities, often communities of color, that were displaced and destroyed. For example, about 1000 miles South of New York City, on the banks of the Arkansas River, in Little Rock, Title I funding enabled the city, via the Little Rock Housing Authority (LRHA), to tear down a ten block area known as the Dunbar neighborhood—a vibrant black community with many churches, schools, and well-kept homes, in close proximity to downtown businesses and shopping (Kirk and Porter 2014). As occurred in so many other cities that engaged in "slum clearance," the Dunbar neighborhood's eventual replacement was an interstate highway, I-631, which cut off the few remaining residents from downtown. Meanwhile, the city built public housing units as far away from white areas as possible. By 1990, according to John Kirk and Jess Porter, "the major public housing projects of the 1950s had 99 percent black occupancy. Predominantly white areas had only 5 percent of

the city's public housing units and there were none at all in the far west of the city" (Kirk and Porter 2014). A city that once had a reputation for a progressive racial climate, both before and after the Civil War, now had the visual appearance of being the result of racial apartheid. It is important to emphasize that the creation of black spaces in New York and Little Rock and in scores of other cities around the country was not simply the result of private racial preferences and, as we have explained above, these discriminatory spatial practices have undermined the civic equality that is supposed to mark a democratic society.

Moving our discussion from urban centers to the suburbs, historian Dolores Hayden reminds her readers that the "triple dream" has captured the imagination of generations of Americans. That dream is composed of more than owning a house of one's own; it is not simply the desire for a bit of land on which one can stretch one's legs or grow a garden; and it is not, exclusively, a longing for a congenial group of neighbors. No: the suburban triple dream is the seductive vision that combines all three—"house plus land plus community" (Hayden 2003, 8). In the early nineteenth century, business owners, their families, and their employees and servants inhabited the same, squalid urban spaces, were subjected to the same fetid smells of the "waste products of workshops and factories" and traveled along the same "muddy streets strewn with filth and rubbish" (21). Those who could afford to escape, affluent and middle class people, moved to the "borderlands," just beyond the reach of the stench and noise of the city (22). Multiple forms of transportation—railroads, steamboats, omnibuses, the electric street car, and, ultimately, the automobile—provided access to the burbs, settlements which originated in the 1820s and have continued apace into the twenty-first century. As we have noted throughout this study, however, to understand the suburbanization of the American landscape as simply the product of millions of individuals who embraced the dream and then successfully achieved a suburban address obscures the indispensable role of government and powerful private sector interest groups in the suburban phenomenon, especially its explosion in the twentieth century. Whether the goal was to shore up a lagging building and real estate industry, to prime the pump of aggregate demand for consumer goods, or to ideologically elevate American individualism, family values, and private property over "creeping socialism," the federal government has been significantly involved in building suburbia. Hayden identifies at least five major interventions that were enacted between the 1920s and 1950s—the home mortgage interest deduction, interstate

highway subsidies, FHA and VA mortgage loan insurance, and tax deductions relating to accelerated depreciation on commercial properties (Hayden 2006, 273). "By providing subsidies indirectly," Hayden observes, "through loan guarantee programs or manipulation of the tax codes, the federal government avoided extensive scrutiny of the politics behind public funding for privately owned space" (274).

But the social actors that helped to build suburbia, as we have chronicled above, did not do so on a racially neutral basis. Practices ranging from restrictive covenants to redlining inscribed economic disadvantage for blacks and economic privilege for whites into the fabric of American suburbs. Indeed, the legacy of racial bias in housing continues to reverberate well into the twenty-first century. According to a joint study conducted by the Institute for Assets and Social Policy at Brandeis University and Demos, data from the 2011 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) showed that the median white household had $111,146 in assets compared to $7113 for black $8348 for Latino households (Traub et al. 2015). The study highlights the importance of home equity, "the largest segment [in most families'] wealth portfolio," and also notes the disparity in homeownership based on race, with 73 percent of whites compared to just 47 percent of Latinos and 45 percent of blacks owning homes (Traub et al. 2015). Commenting on this study, a *Forbes* article concludes that the racial divide in household wealth is largely attributable to differences in homeownership rates and "the gap in the home values in white neighborhoods versus the neighborhoods where people of color live" (Shin 2015). Moreover, the home values in black neighborhoods—which have high rates of poverty and crumbling infrastructure—can be traced, the article claims, to the kinds of discriminatory strategies, such as redlining, we have been discussing. Sadly, racially discriminatory housing practices have not abated. As recently as 2012, Forbes reports that "Wells Fargo admitted it had steered black and Latino households into subprime mortgages but had offered white borrowers with similar credit profiles prime mortgages" (Shin 2015). Similar to what we witnessed with urban modernism and its related urban renewal programs, the growth of suburbs in America, especially in the twentieth century, is inextricably intertwined with discriminatory racial practices. The geographic result—segregation and the creation of black spaces, as Hayward phrases it—contributes to misrecognition, to a distorted identity narrative that stigmatizes both individuals and groups, undercutting the democratic value of civic equality.

Does New Urbanism, for its part, offer solutions that "deconcentrate" racially homogenous spaces and offer greater opportunity for low-income residents of color? In 1992, Congress authorized the Urban Revitalization Demonstration (URD), which became HOPE VI, a new urbanist-inspired public housing program whose main purposes were to replace severely distressed public housing stock, to redistribute low-income families, and to improve and revitalize surrounding areas. To achieve these goals, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), between 1993 and 2010, awarded approximately $6 billion in revitalization grants and another $390 million for demolition grants. The basic idea was to dismantle older public housing projects—especially those places that were plagued with high rates of poverty and crime—and to replace them with new, mixed income properties that would be socioeconomically and racially less isolated. Though there is heterogeneity across locales, ample evidence exists that HOPE VI projects have met at least some of their objectives. A HUD report published in 2002 surveyed 818 households, some of which were living in new HOPE VI developments and others were using housing vouchers in the private market or had been moved to other public housing units. Compared to the original (eight) sites where these residents lived, four of the new neighborhoods had "substantially" lower poverty rates and three new neighborhoods had slightly lower poverty rates; only one reported increased poverty (Buron et al. 2002, 84). Another study, using data from all HOPE VI projects built in the 1990s, reported that poverty in the neighborhoods where HOPE VI projects had been sited showed a 7.6 percent decrease compared to the overall poverty rates for their corresponding cities (Goetz 2010). In regard to crime, a HUD study from 2000 that investigated outcomes for seven representative HOPE VI developments reported that overall crime rates had been reduced up to 72 percent (HUD 2000). To cite just one example, the number of assaults in Oakland's Lockwood Gardens (1993–1997) decreased by 70 percent, while arrests for drug sales and possession fell by 84 percent (HUD 2000). Dramatic crime reduction was also reported at Baltimore's Pleasant View and Atlanta's Centennial Place (HUD 2000). Finally, there also seemed to be some incremental improvement in racial segregation noted in the study of 1990s HOPE VI projects—a three percent overall reduction, with about one-fourth of the projects experiencing a ten percent decrease in the black population (Goetz 2010). Laura Tach's and Allison Dwyer Emory's study analyzing the impact of HOPE VI projects on their surrounding neighborhoods neatly summarizes

the changes engendered by the HOPE VI program: there have been "modest but noticeable changes in the neighborhoods" around these new urbanist public housing projects; "they have become less poor, more income diverse, and more non-Hispanic white, relative to changes that occurred in other public housing" (Tach and Emory 2017).

The voices of HOPE VI detractors, however, are a stark reminder that the program is a work in progress. In language reminiscent of critics of mid-twentieth-century urban renewal programs, Edward Goetz laments HOPE VI's uprooting of the urban poor who have managed to find a modicum of community support and stability in traditional public housing, and he points to a growing body of social science research that "document[s] the nature and extent of social ties, supportive networks, and place attachment in public housing complexes that policy elites had painted as barren wastelands of hopelessness and despair" (Goetz 2013). While it would be hard to ignore or deny the more notorious architectural and social engineering failures of some large-scale urban public housing complexes, it would be equally unsurprising if, as Goetz suggests, a program like HOPE VI undervalued the social benefits provided by some of the public housing units it selected for demolition. Additionally, there is a critical shortage of affordable housing in most cities. Loss of public housing (approximately 260,000 units since 1995) because local Public Housing Authorities intentionally let structures fall into disrepair (so-called *de facto* demolition) or demolished them to make way for new developments, only aggravates the problem (NHLP 2002; Goetz 2012). Moreover, residents given vouchers to move permanently into the private housing market have difficulty finding landlords in "low-poverty, low-minority areas" willing to accept them (Buron et al. 2002, 83). According to the National Housing Law Project, contrary to HUD's claims that many residents "choose," on their own volition, not to return to completed HOPE VI projects, the reasons often have more to do with "inadequate relocation services and poor lines of communication, lack of affordable housing on redevelopment sites, and unreasonably stringent re-admission screening criteria" (NHLP 2002). Finally, even in some of the most successful redevelopment projects, where there have been gains in diversity, especially income diversity, structural change or "deconcentration" has not necessarily translated into diverse social interactions *within* the developments themselves, highlighting the challenge of attempting to foster integration through design (Cabrera and Najarian 2013).

Capabilities

So far we have examined the impact of urban design on social capital and civic equality. Next we take up the question of urban design and human capabilities. Following Aristotle, Martha Nussbaum observes that, in the absence of a vision of human flourishing, without some conception of what constitutes a good human life, it is difficult to design just and effective political institutions and policies. The "capabilities approach," developed by Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Sen 1999, 2009), represents a modern attempt to answer that call. Nussbaum explains that her conception of a good or fully human life is neither "ahistorical" nor rests on *a priori* assumptions; rather, her conception is dependent upon "empirical findings of a broad and ongoing cross-cultural inquiry" (Nussbaum 1998, 317–318). While it does not ignore the biological dimension of human existence—"a relatively constant element"—it refrains from simply reading "the facts of 'human nature' from biological observation" (318). And, finally, she concedes that the various components of her conception of a good life are, to some extent, "differently constructed by different societies" (318). The final result of this inquiry is a "thick vague conception of the good" (318), a catalog of basic goods or capabilities that a person must possess in order to flourish.

Rightly understood, a capability is something a person is "able to do or to be" (Nussbaum 2011, 20). Nussbaum distinguishes inborn qualities, such as athleticism, from "internal capabilities," which refers to a natural ability that has been trained into a specific skill, like playing soccer well. She observes, however, that while some societies may permit the development of internal capabilities, they may "cut off the avenues through which people actually have the opportunity to function in accordance with those capabilities," such as a society which educates its citizens but denies them meaningful participation and free speech (21). Thus, she uses the term "combined capabilities" to refer to the confluence of internal capabilities and favorable social conditions (22). Nussbaum, then, proposes to assess the degree to which various societies nurture and provide political and economic support for the following ten "central capabilities":

Life (e.g. of normal duration, "not dying prematurely");
Bodily health;
Bodily integrity (e.g. freedom of movement, protection from violence);

> *Use of senses, imagination and thought*;
> Emotions (e.g. "being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves");
> Practical reason (e.g. able to critically develop a conception of the good);
> Affiliation (e.g. ability to associate with others and to have the "social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation"—to "be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others");
> Other species (e.g. to be able "to live with concern for and in relation to" nonhumans);
> Play (e.g. recreation);
> Control over one's environment (e.g. politically—opportunity to "participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life"—and materially, the ability to hold property). (33–34)

A just society, according to Nussbaum, attempts to ensure that *each* member is able to avail himself or herself of these capabilities.

Alternatively, to use the democratic language of the "common good," a society's support for combined capabilities is an important sign or indication that the common good is being taken seriously—just as their absence makes democratic claims hollow. In fact, the human capabilities' method of measuring a society's social health and progress, Nussbaum contends, is superior to other traditional measures, such as GDP. She points out that average household income would be a better indicator than GDP of actual living standards, especially in the context of globalization, in which disparities in profits and income are rapidly widening. In short, as a single number focused on economic growth—on the total amount of goods and services produced—GDP obscures divergent social realities. Countries with similar GDPs can "differ radically" in the quality of the healthcare, education, and political rights they deliver (Nussbaum 2011, 50). India, she notes, "has done dramatically worse than China on GDP, and yet it is an extremely stable democracy, with well-protected fundamental liberties; China is not" (47). Again, even if a comparative analysis were to move away from a reductive reliance on GDP and to focus on the availability of primary social goods such as healthcare, it might "fail to go deep enough to diagnose obstacles to functioning," such as "hierarchical patterns of labor [or] gender relations," that can negatively impact functioning, even if resources *appear* to be distributed in an egalitarian way (Nussbaum 1998, 315). What is important, therefore, is not what is hypothetically available or the "rights" people "possess"—say a right to work or to get an education—but rather about capabilities, about what people are *actually* able to do and to be (315).

Before we discuss how a capabilities approach relates to urban design, we should briefly consider a common charge made against it, namely, that it is illiberal. Liberalism, as John Rawls describes it, puts the "Right before the Good" (Rawls 1971); whereas people's conceptions of the good life will differ markedly, Rawls believes they can agree on a neutral framework of justice that will facilitate their pursuit of their chosen ends. By contrast, Nussbaum's theory, by positing a conception of the good life for all humans (despite the proviso that it is "vague") would seem to violate liberal neutrality. Nussbaum's rejoinder to this line of criticism is that her theory is not paternalistic, that it does not force people to exercise the capabilities she identifies. That is, she draws a crucial distinction between "functioning," which is "an active realization of one or more capabilities," and a capability, which presents people with an *opportunity*, not an obligation, to be or to do something (Nussbaum 2011, 24–25). Her theory, she contends, is about promoting freedom and choice, not limiting it. Nussbaum would not endorse, in other words, a government policy that would compel citizens to lead a healthy lifestyle—to function in a particular way, to follow a certain diet or exercise a certain amount per week—as good as that might be (25). Moreover, since Nussbaum's theory focuses on the unique *capabilities* without which one cannot lead a truly human life, it remains neutral vis-à-vis more specific or substantive conceptions of the good: neither the "Wolf of Wall street" nor the bohemian of SoHo is *prescribed* by the capabilities approach.

Having summarized the capabilities approach, we need to demonstrate its relevance to our assessment of urban design. In order to do that, we must return to the idea of "combined capabilities." Recall that combined capabilities refer to the union of internal capabilities, trained or developed traits and talents, and favorable social conditions. One fact that should be clear by now is that the built environment is a key component of our social structure. The main question for us, then, is whether a specific urban design theory is likely to support or inhibit one or more of the central capabilities Nussbaum identifies.

Starting with modernism, freedom of movement or mobility—a centerpiece of Nussbaum's "bodily integrity" capability—would be enthusiastically supported by that paradigm. Robert Moses, using the materials of steel and asphalt, almost single-handedly stitched the five boroughs of New York City together, providing unparalleled access to economic and cultural resources of the metropolitan area. Scores of parks, swimming pools, and playgrounds were also the fruit of Moses's obsession with remaking the urban environment; thus, at least in Moses's vision, infrastructure for the capability of "play" was amply provided for.

As we have seen throughout this study, however, the positive aspects of Moses's modernism tend to have a self-canceling effect. While mobility and movement are a hallmark of modernist design philosophy, its implementation was severely limited by its love affair with the automobile, as witnessed by its construction of myriad bridges, tunnels, and roadways. Public transport, by contrast, received relatively little support. As a consequence, mobility was greatly increased for the car-owning public but *not* for large numbers of citizens who did not possess personal transportation. Furthermore, Nussbaum's "affiliation" capability, which includes the ability to associate with other people and to be guaranteed "self-respect and non-humiliation," was callously ignored. If healthy communities happened to be in the path of one of Moses's grand designs, a roadway project or tunnel, for instance, demolition of said community was seen as a small price to pay for "progress," as the residents of Riverdale, East Tremont, and countless other neighborhoods could attest. Finally, "control over one's environment" is another basic capability identified by Nussbaum, and it includes the right to "participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life." Governmental decisions about the siting of infrastructure—which profoundly impact property values and community cohesion—should be informed by citizen input, yet when concerned citizens showed up to public hearings by commissions that Moses chaired, they were often forbidden to speak or, when they did speak, were treated to the image of Moses's backside as he rudely exited the meeting before listening to their pleas. In the modernist model—and this was true not just of Moses's operation but in urban spaces throughout the country where modernism was ascendant—the opinions of technocrats trumped the ground-level wisdom born of intimate familiarity with how built spaces actually function.

The suburban "triple dream," Hayden's description we used earlier, was composed of "house plus land plus community" and is a convenient formula with which to begin our analysis of the unique ways a suburban tableau promotes human capabilities. The "house" component of the formula connects with the "control over one's environment" capability, which, Nussbaum claims, encompasses the ability to own and dispose of property. As our discussion of suburbs has indicated, many generations of Americans moved to the suburbs precisely to achieve the goal of homeownership—a goal middle class people found difficult to achieve in urban areas where residential properties were expensive in highly desirable places, in short supply in more affordable areas, and a potentially risky

investment in deteriorating or unsafe neighborhoods. Usually, the suburban home came with a small piece of land. If an urban apartment did not have a park close by, recreational opportunities were limited, but the suburban homeowner's backyard, while no substitute for Central Park, offered space for recreational activities, from sports to gardening. In short, the detached, single-family dwelling plus yard supported the capability of "play." Also, in spite of the stereotype of suburban isolation, of automatic garage door openers and privacy fences to facilitate the avoidance of neighbors, scholars of early suburban developments observed high levels of social activity and neighbor interaction, and though contemporary suburbs may be less socially vibrant than their earlier counterparts, scholars such as Thad Williamson report, as we noted in the section on social capital, relatively high levels of social trust among suburbanites compared to city dwellers. That is, the third part of the dream, a sense of community, is something people have sought and continue to find (at least some semblance of it) in suburban spaces. In the idiom of capabilities, "affiliation" can be experienced or practiced in suburbs. Finally, the capability of "bodily integrity," which we tied to modernist mobility above, is also related to "protection from violence." Indeed, being secure from bodily harm or destruction of property is a precondition that needs to be met in order for a mere physical structure, such as a house, to truly feel like a "home" and for social relations, a community, to be established and preserved. And relative security is something promised by the burbs.

By correlating certain qualities and amenities of suburban living with some of the key capabilities identified by Nussbaum, we can readily understand why suburban spaces have exercised such influence and pull on the American imagination. It is undeniable that attributes of many suburbs have, in fact, contributed to what people "can be and do." Nevertheless, similar to our observation about the inherent limits of modernism's version of the capability of mobility (given its preoccupation with automobiles), it is crucial to remember that the suburban dream, and the corresponding capabilities it nurtures, are, from a broader democratic perspective, undercut by its exclusionary practices and intent. As we have discussed, restrictive covenants and redlining conspired to exclude people of color from suburban spaces; other zoning strategies, including the requirements for minimum lot sizes and setbacks, erected barriers to entry for all low-income people, regardless of race. Furthermore, the concentration of wealth in suburban areas and the attendant political influence that follows it have created a political juggernaut that demands

more resources to support suburban living, for example, appropriations to build and repair highways while simultaneously lobbying for lower taxes and opposing expenditures on public goods—such as public transportation and public education—which would benefit and promote the "combined capabilities" for a larger segment of society.

Unlike the spatial practices that undergird suburbanization, the tenants of New Urbanism are explicitly inclusive and civically minded. Despite the fact that the implementation of New Urbanism has not always matched its aspirations, as a design philosophy, it diagnoses sprawl's practices of exclusion and formulates possible remedies, consciously builds in measures to promote opportunities for a broader range of people. For instance, if we return to Nussbaum's capability of bodily integrity/freedom of movement, a new urbanist design philosophy attempts to address modernism's and suburban sprawl's obsession with the automobile, which often leads the elderly, children, and the poor literally and figuratively stranded. Specifically, new urbanist developments are compact and include infrastructure—such as bike lanes, sidewalks, and traffic calming elements—to make walking and biking both enticing and safe, enabling those who do not have access to cars to move about freely. And New Urbanism's Transportation Oriented Developments (TODs) seek to connect new urbanist developments to light rail or other public transport. Moving on to the capability of affiliation, which carries with it the "social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation," new urbanist design not only mixes uses—to capture social and economic synergies—but also provides mixed income housing in order to facilitate access to new urbanist development amenities for a more diverse group of people. That is, New Urbanism "recognizes" the value of a broader range of individuals, affirms that people who may have been marginalized by modernism's urban renewal projects or excluded by the discriminatory practices of suburbanization, have important contributions to make—are "worthy" of being neighbors—are not pushed aside because of socioeconomic status or race.

Much more will be said about environmental concerns in the section that follows, but it is important to note here that the "ability to live with concern for and in relation to" nonhumans is promoted by the Charter of New Urbanism insofar as it advocates for regional plans that include urban growth boundaries to protect open spaces (and the species that live therein) and are solicitous of environmentally sensitive features, such as watersheds. Besides offering infrastructure to promote biking and walking, new urbanist designs also feature other recreational amenities, such as

parks and greenspaces, which align with the "play" capability. And, finally, as we discovered in the chapter on New Urbanism, its charter expresses a commitment to "citizen-based participatory planning and design"—checking off yet another capability, namely, political "control over one's environment." That is, New Urbanism's participatory instincts contrast starkly with modernist reliance on expert planning and the developer-driven model of suburbs. In sum, though New Urbanism, in its origins, did not consciously use the social map of Nussbaum's capabilities list, its civic and humanist orientation reveals a deep affinity with the capabilities approach, and it appears to offer a model for a built environment that provides more combined capabilities, more opportunities for people "to be and do."

Sustainability

When considering the most important components of a theory of democracy, "sustainability," at least defined in a narrow, environmental sense, does not immediately spring to mind. Arguably a healthy, ecological base is a fundamental prerequisite to the flourishing of *any* human community, not just democracies. Nonetheless, as we will discover below, there is a strong affinity between sustainability and the value of political stability, especially in democracy's republican mode (Cannavò 2016; Barry 2012). The most commonly accepted definition of sustainable development can be found in the Brundtland Report, where the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development offered this formulation: sustainable development "meets the needs of the present without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (WCED 1987). To better appreciate the connection between democracy and sustainability, it is helpful to recall the environmental concerns that gave rise to the discourse of sustainability in the first place. In 1972, Donella Meadows and her colleagues at MIT published *The Limits to Growth*—a report on the "predicament of mankind" (Meadows et al. 1972, 20; updated in 1992 and 2005). She and her team built a computer model, "World3," that investigated the causes of and interrelationships among five worrying global trends, "accelerating industrialization, rapid population growth, widespread malnutrition, depletion of nonrenewable resources, and a deteriorating environment" (21). The sobering conclusion of the report was if these trends continued unabated within 100 years, a threshold would be crossed beyond which no more growth of the human

community would be possible, and that reaching this absolute limit would likely be accompanied by the "sudden and uncontrollable" decrease in industrial output and population (23). The specter of an apocalyptic social collapse, many argued (Ophuls 1977; Heilbroner 1991), would necessitate fundamental political changes, including more centralized, even authoritarian, political arrangements. Eventually, these thinkers argued, democratic decision-making would be replaced by technical solutions proffered by experts, and compliance with rules would be guaranteed less by consent and more by governmental discipline. Of course this authoritarian path is not the only conceivable political strategy for dealing with the increasing severity of present and future environmental crises—some thinkers, such as green political theorist John Dryzek, have called for more democracy, not less.[2] Still, the writings of Ophuls and other eco-authoritarians raise serious questions about whether democratic states can survive future environmental stress tests, whether they will have the resilience and political will to deal with ecological calamities. To the degree these warnings have any purchase, it highlights the urgency of adopting sustainable strategies and practices in order to avert the worst ecological outcomes and, thereby, preserve democratic political traditions.

Moreover, the significant relationship between sustainability and democracy can be appreciated when one considers the critical *material* dimension of democracy, as emphasized by Jefferson and Wright and explored in this project. This material reading of democracy underlines the notion that democracy needs to be a "lived" reality—not just for a few but for all—that abstract political rights are no substitute for a material base that supports well-being for all citizens. Whether that material base refers to land or other stocks of natural capital, the discourse of sustainability warns us that these vital resources can be depleted past the point of recovery—placing the democratic community, certainly its ability to fulfill its egalitarian aspirations, in jeopardy. Precisely for this reason, the definition of sustainable development "builds in" an ethical imperative to give future generations, future citizens, moral consideration.

Before we proceed to investigate how various built spaces promote or ignore sustainability, it is worth briefly noting the critiques leveled at the sustainability discourse. From the Right, the sustainability discourse looks dark and unnecessarily gloomy, justifying regulations that will impede the economic growth that has gifted some humans an unprecedented quality of life and lifted others out of poverty. The strategy from this end of the political spectrum is to cast doubt on the key premise of environmental

limits. The classic text that illustrates this approach is Julian Simon's 1984 book, *The Resourceful Earth: A Response to Global 2000*. Simon observes, for example, that while the Global 2000 Report predicted increasing scarcity of basic natural resources, like minerals, "the long-run trend is toward less scarcity and lower prices" (Simon 1984, 14). His key premise is that price reflects scarcity; assuming aggregate demand to be constant, if an item becomes scarce, the price will *rise*, not decrease. But in many instances, he asserts, prices of non-fuel minerals are dropping; therefore, "as hard [it] may be for many people to believe," non-fuel minerals are actually becoming less scarce (14). Contrary to the story sustainability advocates are trying to spin, "[t]hroughout history, individuals and communities have responded to actual and expected shortages of raw materials in such a fashion that eventually the materials have become more readily available than if the shortages had never arisen" (9). After Simon's death, Bjørn Lomborg took up Simon's "promethean"—as Dryzek calls it—mantle, penning a book titled *The Skeptical Environmentalist*. Lomborg analyzed global data and drew inferences similar to Simon's: "natural resources, energy, and food are becoming more abundant, fewer people are starving, life expectancy is increasing, pollution is eventually reduced by economic growth, species extinction presents a limited and manageable problem," and so on (Dryzek 2005, 55). Are these conclusions valid?

Considering every one of these claims would go well beyond the scope of this study, but we can ponder one of Simon's representative claims, namely, that a drop in the price of non-fuel minerals is evidence for decreasing scarcity. If we take iron ore as an example, there is, in fact, a limited supply in the earth's crust. The most plausible explanation for a price decrease over a given period of time is that technological advances have accelerated extraction. This means that there is, in the *short-run*, a large supply available for purchase (which drives prices down). In the meantime, this valuable resource is being depleted at a rapid rate. Contra Simon, price, especially for natural resources, is often a poor measure of scarcity.

According to Simon and Lomborg, even if we *were* to exhaust key industrial inputs that would not be a cause for concern, because substitutes for critical resources can be found. To begin, substitutes, especially for nonrenewable resources, are not easy to find, and there is no guarantee they will be as useful as the originals. The truly crucial point, however, is that social scientists like Simon and Lomborg treat the economy as an

abstract, free-floating entity, not something embedded in the biosphere with its physical limits. Herman Daly observes that the "stuff" to which human capital is applied, that to which value is added, is conceived by most contemporary economists as "the flow of natural resources … as the indestructible building blocks of nature" (Daly 1996, 62). In this paradigm, "useful structure" is added to matter by the "agency of labor," and what is exhausted in consumption is precisely the useful structure contributed by human ingenuity (62). Thus, the "value consumed by humans is, in this view, no greater than the value added by humans" (62). This description is accurate, argues Daly, so long as the First Law of Thermodynamics (conservation of energy) holds sway; however, when the Second Law of Thermodynamics enters the equation, a very different picture emerges, one that places both the value of human labor and natural capital in their proper perspective:

> Matter is arranged in production, disarranged in consumption, rearranged in production etc. The second law of thermodynamics tells us that all this rearranging and recycling of material building blocks takes energy, that energy itself is not recycled, and that on each cycle some of the material building blocks are dissipated beyond recall. It remains true that we do not consume matter/energy but we do consume the *capacity to rearrange* matter/energy… We not only consume the value we add to matter, *but also the value that was added by nature before we imported it into the economic subsystem* and that was necessary for it to be considered a resource in the first place. (65)

In other words, if the universe presented a conveyor belt of endlessly recyclable bits upon which we could imprint our intellectual property designs, then the cosmic balance sheet might function as Simon and Lomborg wished. Given that the "amenability" of these bits to our creative designs can be exhausted, however, this sanguine attitude about our ability to produce value without apparent ecological limits is incredibly naïve.

From the Left, the sustainability discourse appears to be an ideological tool that enables the global economy to hum along with impunity; it devoutly professes its belief in ecological limits while simultaneously facilitating their transgression. While more radical ecological prescriptions threaten the "convenience and pleasures of the modern lifestyle," argues Ingolfur Blühdorn, the appeal of the sustainability discourse can be attributed to the elegant way it acknowledges the severity of a variety of environmental crises, expresses dedication to alleviating global poverty

and critiques the capitalist economic system, *yet* offers an alternative that seems more "palatable and feasible than a wholesale departure from industrial capitalism and the consumer culture" (Blühdorn 2016, 262). The seductive promise of sustainability, Blühdorn suggests, is a willingness to work *within* the existing system, instead of discarding it, and providing assurances that improved scientific understanding, technical innovations and more efficient resource management will suffice to ward off the direst scenarios (262). Thus, the paradoxical result of the discourse of sustainability is a "politics of unsustainability" in which the "structural change that radical ecologists and many scientists regard as essential" to prevent societal collapse is dangerously deferred (259).

While the charge that the sustainability discourse "enables" too much environmental destruction and delays necessary change may be valid, the truth remains that, for the foreseeable future at least, the political will to implement more radical structural reform appears to be diminishing. With China's voracious appetite for raw materials and energy, "pace its One Belt, One Road initiative," and the ascendance of ideologically nationalistic parties in the West, global cooperation to reduce climate change has been cast in doubt and domestic politics are focused on short-term economic growth and protectionism. All to say that now is not the time to give up on sustainability, despite its weaknesses as a discourse, and to embrace whatever positive changes it can still deliver. Considering that in 2015 transportation accounted for nearly one-third of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States and that emissions from residential and commercial buildings accounted for 12 percent (EPA 2017), serious thinking about ways to re-engineer the built environment, to reduce the total number of miles driven by vehicles, for example, is critical.

If we turn to design models, beginning with modernism, we should not be shocked to discover that modernism pays little attention to sustainability. Modernist built spaces are deracinated—compelling residents to live in environments that largely eschew historical and cultural markers. Similarly, urban modernism tends to ignore local climate, topography, and flora. The cement city centers of Brasília or Chandigarh—incarnations of the sterile plans of modernist architects Oscar Niemeyer and Le Corbusier respectively—are illustrative. In the case of Robert Moses, we noted that he not only dismantled healthy communities like East Tremont but also destroyed Inwood Park's primeval forest and ecologically sensitive waterfront property to make way for his Westside Highway project.

Indeed, there is a long, anti-urban tradition that pits the mechanistic and lifeless city against the thriving organism of the countryside. And the modern city's pitiless treatment of nature is one of the factors that sent people flocking to the suburbs, where they could enjoy cleaner air and bucolic surroundings. When people became aware of the environmental damage wrought by suburbs themselves, however, that set off alarms. In his book *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism*, Adam Rome provides an "archetypal" environmental narrative in which some new product is hailed as a breakthrough—in this case, a massive wave of housing to meet pent up post-war demand—that eventually comes to be seen as an environmental menace (Rome 2001, 5). Suburbanization, of course, had been well underway in America before WWII, but it was the quantity of housing, the rapidity with which it went up and the new post-war building techniques that led to adverse ecological impacts and, ultimately, catalyzed environmental activism to raise awareness and to attempt to lessen suburbanization's effects. According to Rome, during the post-war construction boom:

> builders put hundreds of thousands of homes in environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands, steep hillsides, and floodplains. Builders also began to use new earth-moving equipment to level hills, fill creeks, and clear vegetation from vast land tracts. The result was more frequent flooding, costly soil erosion, and drastic changes in wildlife populations… Because the cheapest and largest tracts were beyond the reach of municipal sewer systems, the use of septic tanks increased sharply, yet septic tanks were a problematic method of disposing of household wastes in densely settled areas: septic-tank failures caused outbreaks of disease, groundwater contamination, and eutrophication of lakes. (3)

Beyond chronicling these phenomena, social scientists have also tried to assign quantitative measures to sprawl's environmental impact.

Economists Edward Glaeser and Matthew Kahn, for instance, looked at metropolitan areas for which IPUMS (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series) data could be disaggregated for central cities and suburbs (48 metropolitan areas total) and found a significant "city-suburb" carbon dioxide emissions gap. In Los Angeles, for example, suburban drivers emit about 691 lbs. more than their city counterparts. The gap between suburban and city drivers in Philadelphia is even more pronounced, approximately ten times higher, or 6884 lbs. (Glaeser and Kahn 2009,

415). This gap occurs both in newer cities, where everyone drives but suburbanites drive longer distances, and older cities, where city residents use more public transportation (416). Analyzing the 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (NPTS), Matthew Kahn, in a different study, reported that residents in suburbs drove 31 percent more than central city residents (Kahn 2000). Moreover, there were significant regional differences: whereas city residents in the Northeast drove 43 percent less than suburbanites, in the West the differential was only 17 percent, due to the lack of public transportation availability (Kahn 2000). Here again, the driving habits of suburban residents do not compare favorably, since the quantity of harmful emissions is largely tied to miles driven. This leads Kahn to conclude that "suburban growth has increased fuel consumption and contributed to the United States' aggregate production of greenhouse gases. This reduced the United States' ability to honor any global warming treaty commitments" (Kahn 2000). Technology could mitigate some of this impact through better emissions control strategies and/or improved fuel economy; however, given the resurgent popularity of light trucks and SUVs, greenhouse gas emissions stemming from personal vehicle use will continue to pose a serious challenge.

An additional concern is loss of natural capital and biodiversity because of suburban sprawl. In the absence of wise land use policies and planning, land at the fringes of metropolitan areas, claims Kahn, will continue to be converted to urban uses, resulting in the destruction of forests, farmland, and open space (Kahn 2000). According to the National Wildlife Federation, an analysis of NatureServe's rare and endangered species list indicates that 60 percent of the rarest and most endangered species inhabit designated metropolitan areas, "with the 35 fastest growing metropolitan areas home to one-third (29 percent) of these species" (Ewing and Kostyack 2005). If one moves from a metropolitan to a county-level assessment, the need for action appears even more urgent, for at least 287 "imperiled" species live in 37 counties which stand to lose 50 percent or more of their non-federal open space in the first quarter of the twenty-first century (Ewing and Kostyack 2005).

In stark contrast to urban modernism and sprawling suburban developments, New Urbanism's original charter (CNU 1996) explicitly embraced conservation and, recognizing the "profound nature of the environmental crisis," the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) adopted a companion document in 2008, the "Canons of Sustainable Architecture and Urbanism," in order to more fully integrate the best practices of

smart growth and green building and to advance the "goals of true sustainability" (CNU "Canons" 2016). As we learned in the chapter on New Urbanism, the design philosophy relies on four basic sustainability strategies: decreasing automobile dependence, promoting sustainable building practices, siting consistent with natural topography, and implementing growth-limiting elements, such as urban growth boundaries.

We have established New Urbanism's "will" to sustainability. Whether new urbanist developments are actually achieving their sustainability objectives has not been studied extensively; however, some evidence seems to support new urbanists' claims that their designs will decrease automobile use. One study, cited earlier in our chapter on New Urbanism, compared travel behavior in three communities in East Portland—Fairview Village, a new urbanist development, and two conventional subdivisions. The investigator, Jennifer Dill, found that residents of Fairview Village, the new urbanist development, walked more and drove less than residents who resided in the two conventional suburban neighborhoods she studied (Dill 2006, 68). Another study, conducted by Asad Khattak and Daniel Rodriguez, matched a large, neo-traditional or new urbanist neighborhood, "Southern Village," located in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with a conventional suburban neighborhood in Carrboro, North Carolina. These are adjacent communities in the Research Triangle area and are home to over 55,000 residents and share a transit provider and public school system (Khattak and Rodriguez 2005, 484). Compared to Carrboro, the conventional suburb, Southern Village, the new urbanist settlement, has smaller lot sizes, greater net density, mixed land uses, bike and walking trails, sidewalks, and access to local stores (485). Khattak and Rodriguez found that, while residents in both neighborhoods made an equal number of trips, "neo traditional [or new urbanist] neighborhood households substitute alternative modes for driving trips" (497). Specifically, new urbanist households took 1.6 fewer trips per day and traveled an average of 14.7 fewer miles per day. These findings confirm the results from earlier studies (Cevero and Kockelman, 1997; Cevero and Radisch 1995) that showed new urbanist households driving fewer miles and making more trips on foot (497). Notably, by using a survey to establish "residential location choice," Khattak and Rodriguez were also able to control for neighborhood selection effects, making their results even more persuasive.

Each of the foregoing urban designs has its virtues, but only one, New Urbanism, is able to lay claim to making progress on all four measures—social capital accumulation, non-discrimination, human capabilities, and

environmental sustainability. Urban modernism, with its imposing infrastructure—impressive roadways, bridges, and skyscrapers—offers people vertical and horizontal mobility, freedom of movement, and often throws in some recreational and cultural amenities; however, it is painfully deficient when it comes to promoting civic equality, particularly in its urban "renewal" mode, and it is insouciant at best, contemptuous at its worst, toward community building. The suburbs, for their part, do, indeed, offer residents a slice of the American dream—a protective social nest of trusted neighbors and stable property values, especially where gates are involved, but the building of the burbs, as we have seen, has been implicated in a sordid history of exclusionary practices and has drained public resources that shattered the American dream for others. And, without revolutionary changes in fueling and powering burbs, they contribute to environmental decline. In regard to New Urbanism, we have been very careful to highlight the ways in which its aspirations have outstripped its ability to execute, where it has come up short of its goals. Nonetheless, in spite of its shortcomings, New Urbanism aspires to and is intentional about forging civic bonds, fostering social equality and integration, maximizing capabilities and achieving sustainable forms of living. That suburbanization and urban modernism are tightly bound, ideologically, to individualistic interpretations of democracy—and, in turn, that the social experiences these built spaces provide are seriously lacking in the ways we have chronicled—begs the question whether the individualistic versions of democracy misconstrue democracy's basic meaning and purpose, whether such models fully grasp what exactly democracy should deliver and for whom.

Notes

1. In order to define and measure "civic-ness," Putnam developed four indicators. One factor was the prevalence of associational life (clubs and voluntary organizations) in each region, which had been conveniently tracked by an Italian census, and a second was the percentage of households in which at least one person read a daily newspaper, since newspaper readership is tightly correlated with civic knowledge and interest (M, 91–93). The third factor was voter participation in referenda. Data for electoral turnout in general elections, by contrast, were "marred" by, among other things, "patron-client" networks that artificially boosted turnout. Moreover, Italians are not legally obligated to vote in referenda—as they are in general elections—and thus the referenda are a better measure of interest in public issues (M, 93).

Finally, in general elections, Italians are obligated to choose a single party list but also have the option to register a preference for a particular candidate on the party list. Putnam explained that these so-called preference votes are central to maintaining the patron-client relationship, so preference voting became an indicator for an "absence" of civic community (94).

2. John Dryzek, for example, has argued forcefully for more democracy. Whereas wealthy interests and other privileged actors often manipulate and take advantage of purportedly fair democratic procedures, his ecological democracy advocates for "discursive designs" that ensure more inclusivity and transparency in collective decision-making (Dryzek 1990, 32–49) and expands the concept of democracy itself to acknowledge natural "agency," the ways in which natural signals of distress can be interpreted as communication (Dryzek 1998, 588–590). Whether this more radical version of democracy will be embraced by modern states is an open question.

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CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

The last chapter, the penultimate of this project, provided an assessment or evaluation of various urban designs in regard to their degree of sympathy with and support for a democratic political culture. Using four different democratic metrics—social capital, social equality (recognition/non-discrimination), maximization of human capabilities, and sustainability—we demonstrated that, on balance, a new urbanist paradigm was more solicitous and supportive of democracy than either suburban sprawl or urban modernism. Since New Urbanism is closely aligned with a civic or communal understanding of democracy—and suburbs and modernist cityscapes are more closely allied with an individualistic interpretation of democracy—the conclusion was that the former actually serves people better, provides a better lived experience, a closer approximation of the general welfare.

The other part of this claim is that a communally inflected form of democracy—and its affiliated urban designs—is able to support civic attitudes and practices while *simultaneously* giving individual liberty and freedom their due. Indeed, just because civically oriented design philosophies like Olmsted's or New Urbanism are more attentive to the needs of a democratic political culture does not mean that they are any less solicitous of the value of liberty. As we have seen, in his day Olmsted's public spaces greatly expanded opportunities for recreation and social intercourse for people who lived in proximity to them. Contemporary new urbanist developments, too, enlarge people's access to recreational amenities, but they also enhance other opportunities. For example, by

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strategically mixing higher and more modest income housing types, new urbanist developments provide greater access to property ownership. Moreover, by promoting multiple forms of transport in their designs—that is, public transport, bike paths, and walking trails—New Urbanism also increases mobility and personal freedom for many groups, especially for youth and the elderly whose movements are often limited by the auto dependence of traditional suburbs.

It is true that public parks and amenities require tax revenue for their construction and ongoing maintenance, and it is also true that New Urbanism makes use of zoning powers and ordinances to regulate property (e.g. setbacks) and street design. And, New Urbanism's "transect" concept—which calls for greater population densities at the center of developments and much lighter densities at the edge of communities—accommodates environmental values by protecting sensitive ecosystems, using design elements like urban growth boundaries. However, precisely because they view taxation and most regulations as an assault on private property, many libertarians would deride the notion that Olmsted's parks or new urbanist plans "safeguard" liberty.

Beyond the fact that such an absolutist view of private property is philosophically difficult to defend, as we explained in the chapter on New Urbanism, libertarians' profound suspicion of democratic lawmaking, including levying taxes and regulating property uses for the common good, is inconsistent with the value of ordered liberty that animated the nation-building project of the founding generation. Recognizing that the original frame of government, the Articles of Confederation, was inadequate to secure the blessings of liberty, the founders crafted a new system of government—*novus ordo seclorum*—with the requisite energy and powers. This included the power to tax and spend, to regulate commerce, and to do all that future legislators might deem necessary and proper to carry out the responsibilities of government. In addition to enumerating the powers of the national government, the Constitution, via the Tenth Amendment, also protected the authority of state governments, to which, by common law, were granted basic "police powers"—to protect the safety, morals, health, and welfare of their citizens. In other words, citizens' rights were not only protected by these constitutional and legal structures but they were *contextualized and sculpted to match the sociological requirements of living in a shared, democratic community*—harmonized so that the liberties of each were compatible with the liberties of all. Seen in this light, legislatively approved taxes and ordinances used to

build Olmstedian public spaces or new urbanist developments are consistent with the principle of ordered liberty, and these spaces greatly enhance the personal freedoms of those who live in or make use of them.

Having redeemed, by leveraging insights from an analysis of urban design paradigms, the major normative claim of the book—namely, that while individual freedom and liberty are crucial aspects of a democratic political culture, a communally inflected version of democracy safeguards freedom better than individualistically inflected forms preserve and nurture civic values—we can now take stock of the most significant contributions made by the thinkers, architects, and planners covered in the previous pages and to affirm, once again, the richness of the American landscape, its built environments, and the democratic life that has sprung from and been housed by them.

As European settlements took hold on the American continent in the seventeenth century, fledgling democratic institutions and practices were established, first at the local and colonial level and ultimately, by the eighteenth century, in the new states and in the national government that bound them together. By the turn of the nineteenth century, a fundamental divide over political economy pitted Jefferson against Hamilton, the former offering an agrarian vision for America and issuing dire warnings if the country were to veer from its agrarian path and the other casting a vision of an expansive, commercial republic, which alone, he argued, would employ the talents of each person and take full advantage of the continent's vast resources. Thoreau, raising his voice some years later, largely opposed both the narrow agrarian and the voracious manufacturing visions, pleading instead for his compatriots to remember that a genuine republic had to continually nourish and renew itself through its kinship with the wild. In the end, two basic narratives—one agrarian, the other at home in the wilderness—each succeeded in combining, in a compelling and internally consistent way, a commitment to democratic governance and an attachment to place, to the land. The latter component was especially important, for it echoed the centrality and spiritual character of the land found in earlier views—with, on the one hand, Native Americans, who had developed their own civilization long before Europeans arrived, and for whom the land was sacred, a space spiritually and not just biologically fecund, and, on the other hand, with many Europeans, for whom the land was also imbued with spiritual significance, as a place of promise, divinely given to a new chosen people.

As we have noted, however, as compelling as the Jeffersonian agrarian and Thoreauvian wilderness narratives may be, they also exhibit serious

shortcomings. It has been argued that to the degree agrarians succumb to the temptation of exponential growth—depart from husbanding the land and attending to the needs of the local community—the land is mistreated, its generative powers sapped, and many people dedicated to and dependent upon cultivation are cast aside and exploited. And, to the degree the wilderness abets self-discovery and actualization but weakens ties to civil society, the body politic loses the civic energy required to protect the wilderness itself from mere profit-seekers and to protect fellow citizens from the inevitable acts of injustice that occur in every human society.

Nevertheless, just because we refuse to romanticize the agrarian and wilderness traditions does not mean we intend to dismiss their value entirely. On the contrary, the point was to critically interpret those traditions in order to warn against their dangers while simultaneously holding up and endorsing those aspects that are most compatible with democracy. One way to register the value of these traditions, as executed in earlier chapters, is to highlight the democratically calibrated virtues with which they are most associated. For instance, the agrarian tradition contends that owning and cultivating one's own land provides a modicum of economic independence that, in turn, promotes the independence of thought and belief indispensable for democratic self-governance. Self-sufficiency is also a central virtue of Thoreau's, where the ability of people to stand on their own two feet within a bounteous wilderness gives them a unique, outsider perspective that could be used to critique and prod the body politic into living up to its express values.

Some of the virtues of the agrarian and wilderness traditions overlap and are mutually reinforcing, pace the virtue of self-sufficiency discussed above. Nonetheless, these traditions also define two poles of a full-bodied spectrum of practices and experiences—from "Jeffersonian ward to wilderness," from wise cultivation of the land to ecstatic exploration of it, from communities knit together by labor, husbandry, and self-government to self-discovery through solitude and kinship with wild nature. As the speed of settlement and city-building accelerated in the nineteenth century and twentieth century, the best planners and architects were cognizant of these deep currents of thought and selected design elements to accommodate multiple experiences on that spectrum. Those architects and planners who have been the most successful, the book argues, are those who recognize that the experiential spectrum above is symbolic of a good life—one that embraces the privileges of citizenship and communal participation and is equally serious about pursuing individual growth and

development. Therein lies the value and importance of these primary landscapes for this project—as inspiration for built environments, for underlining important aspects of a genuine democratic society and, more broadly, for marking a path to a well-rounded human life.

Frederick Law Olmsted, America's premier landscape architect, feared that unfettered greed, given wide latitude by market forces, and unprecedented levels of immigration, absent countervailing strategies for assimilation, were, in his day, contributing to the unraveling of America's social fabric. The republican virtues of the founding generation—self-sacrifice, self-regulation, and public-spiritedness—were receding at an alarming rate. Olmsted's public parks, then, were his way of attempting to revive civic fraternity in America and to mitigate the centrifugal forces of unbridled capitalism and to civilize and "Americanize" waves of newcomers. In this list of concerns, one can easily spot Olmsted's class and conservative social biases, and we analyzed at length, in the chapter dedicated to Olmsted's work, how he promised more social bonding than his landscape designs could actually deliver. In spite of these weaknesses, however, the animating goal of his landscape architecture—the restoration of a civic community and the promotion of fraternity—is what defines his greatness, both as a designer and political thinker.

What difference, Olmsted was essentially asking, did democratic law-making, playing out in the halls of Congress, matter to the average city dweller in the mid-nineteenth century? If a person might, in theory, have the ability to vote for political candidates, how did that privilege of democratic citizenship compensate for a cramped tenement existence? While Olmsted did not disparage the rights of political participation (though he did complain about the abuses of political patronage), he was convinced that, in a fundamental sense, democracy was established, or forfeited, at the ground level. That is, a democratic society had to offer more than the occasional opportunity to cast a ballot; it had to pair political rights with meaningful, life-enhancing opportunities—not just suffrage rights (far from universal in Olmsted's time) but generous access to natural spaces and recreational activities that provided fresh air, rest, and rejuvenation. Even more, he designed his public parks to facilitate social integration through copresence. People from different classes and ethnicities might take advantage of a park in different ways—and, it is true, they may not engage in serious political debate—but that did not change the fact that they shared a common space and, therefore, observed the basic signs and gestures of humanity all around them: their fellow

neighbors assisting an elderly loved one down a path, eating food at a family picnic, playing games with children. These shared experiences, made possible by a public space, served to remind people that America was a large, diverse, and beautiful entity. In our time, when America is more economically and geographically segregated than ever—where publicly owned and maintained spaces are retreating as privately owned malls and gated enclaves have come to dominate the landscape—one wonders whether the lack of face-to-face interaction among people of different classes, races and ethnicities, because of the lack of public space, foments a kind of social hardening, a subtle marginalization or forgetfulness of the common humanity of the "others" who are also Americans.

Moving on to America's best known architect, Frank Lloyd Wright, the book argues that Wright's multiple sketches of Broadacre City suffer from a kind of schizophrenia. In some instances, Broadacres brilliantly describes the kind of architecture—social, economic, and physical—well-suited for a democratic society and, in other ways, it tragically undermines the democratic values and individualism it espouses. The latter version of Broadacres, a decentralist's utopia, anticipates suburban sprawl—residential developments growing and spreading their tentacles across the American landscape—and cedes dictatorial control to architects. Fortunately, there is another side to his vision. At their best, Wright's ruminations on Broadacre City articulate a sense of democratic "sheltering"—which entail the construction of modest yet intelligently designed and aesthetically pleasing housing (pace the prairie and usonian models) for the common person, all erected on the egalitarian social and economic foundation of easy access to land, credit, and energy. Despite first appearances, this is not a paternalistic sheltering. Wright's Broadacres attempted to provide an equal opportunity for each citizen, a common material starting line, but it did not guarantee equal results or establish a large welfare state. This grand social vision, as horizontally oriented as the Great American plains, promised instead to give each citizen a fighting chance to prepare the soil out of which individuals could emerge and develop, partially protected, Wright hoped, from the vagaries of fluctuating markets and the predations of finance capital.

Like Olmsted's, then, Wright's democracy is a ground-level affair. Voting rights, the establishment of democratic procedures for lawmaking, the word "equality" on the lips only: these things alone could never create a democratic society, which, in Wright's estimation, required a genuine material experience of well-being. As we near the end of the second decade

of the twenty-first century, the broad material platform Wright hoped to bring about has been replaced by an unnerving and unstable sloping platform—and one, it turns out, that is quite slippery for middle class Americans who are sliding at alarming rates into lower income brackets. As a 2015 Pew Research Center report indicates, the middle class is being rapidly hollowed out as more Americans now occupy positions in lower- and upper-income households (Pew Research Center 2015). Ironically, this economic reshuffling, in which the rich literally became richer after last decade's financial crisis and the poor became poorer—currently the top 0.1 percent of Americans holds 22 percent of all wealth, compared to only 7 percent in 1979, approximately the same as the bottom 90 percent (Saez and Zucman 2014)—was caused, at least in part, by social actors, like banks and other mortgage lenders, who were busy lining their pockets building the sprawling burbs, the dismal incarnation of Wright's Broadacres, sometimes using the dubious strategy of selling subprime mortgages and then brazenly betting against the very money they had lent via credit default swaps. Wright's better Broadacres' angels, at least for now, seem to have absconded.

In his own way, Robert Moses, similar to Olmsted and Wright, believed that democracy had to deliver something more concrete (in Moses's case, this was quite literal) than the privilege of casting a ballot. When democratic means could achieve his goals, he used those, and when they proved to be ineffective, he simply circumvented them. Recall that Moses started out as a "good government" crusader, a progressive reformer. However, after being taken under the wing of New York Governor Al Smith, and ultimately appointed New York Secretary of State, Moses learned the intricacies of drafting legislation in Albany, a skill which he turned into the dark art of legislative deception—an art he always practiced in the name of serving the "common good." Later, as the head of several public commissions and authorities, Moses's methods became even more authoritarian, as he cynically but masterfully used his power to execute his master plan. If some people and communities ended up as collateral damage, that, in Moses's mind, was a cost far outweighed by the benefits of constructing over a dozen major bridges, hundreds of playgrounds, and miles of parkways and nearly 150,000 units of housing. To his critics, he insisted that he simply gave the citizens of New York what they wanted, and what, he asked, is anti-democratic about that?

Moses's impatience with and ambivalence toward democracy is not difficult to understand, even if some of his methods and outcomes are mor-

ally objectionable. If he were alive today, he would no doubt gesture scornfully at America's crumbling material base—and a moribund democracy that appears incapable of shoring it up. In 2017, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave the United States a cumulative D+ grade for infrastructure (ASCE 2017). Even more depressing is the broad acknowledgment of the problem, coupled with paralysis: "Business leaders, labor unions, governors, mayors, congressmen and presidents have complained about a lack of funding for years," noted a recent segment of the news magazine *60 Minutes*, "but aside from a onetime cash infusion from the stimulus program, nothing much has changed. There is still no consensus on how to solve the problem or where to get the massive amounts of money needed to fix it…" (CBS News 2014). Indeed, Moses's staggering success, aided precisely by his skirting of democratic accountability, stands as a potent indictment of American democracy. That is, the claim that democracy is the regime form best suited to problem solving—because it supposedly relies on and recruits ideas and talent from a deeper well than other regimes—is painfully undercut by America's recent helplessness in the face of a growing number of serious national challenges, infrastructure deterioration being only one among many. There is a vast literature chronicling the apparent inability of nation states in the twenty-first century to shoulder the burdens and expectations placed upon them and exploring the causes of democratic dysfunction (including such things as campaign finance rules, legislative gerrymandering, corporate control of the media, etc.), but legislative gridlock is at least partly attributable to hyper-partisanship (aggravated and abetted by elements in the list above) and a concomitant implosion of civil discourse and cooperation. If the claims made by this book are to be believed, then the design of our built environment bears some responsibility for our civic decline and its attendant drag on our capacity to act collectively. Democratic societies, this project contends, cannot ignore the consequences of our spatial politics: certain kinds of configurations support a civic, democratic culture; others have a corrosive impact. We may now be harvesting the bitter fruit of the false assumption that our architectural and planning choices are politically unimportant. The sooner we realize this—and mend our ways—the sooner we may have a response to Moses. For now, as we gaze upon his planning oeuvre, we are left with a mixture of awe and disapproval.

New Urbanism, for its part, sought to recover the design wisdom contained in America's and Europe's most livable towns and cities, to re-

establish a more humane, place-making tradition, and to stand as a bulwark against the depredations of suburban sprawl and urban modernism. Nonetheless, we have not hesitated to challenge its pretensions or to rehearse the myriad critiques leveled against it—that it is linked to gentrification, that its promise to foster diversity has not been kept, that it focuses too much on design and not enough on the "social architecture" and services that are required to achieve its exalted aims, that it contributes to sprawl (despite its criticisms of it) because new developments outstrip urban infill projects. Yet, we have also defended New Urbanism for its perspicacious and sober assessment of the deficiencies of our built spaces and for developing and articulating design strategies that begin to remedy the problems. While significant, the defects of some new urbanist projects are not insurmountable, especially if new urbanist architects and planners take the criticisms to heart and modify and improve on their strategies and their implementation. Compared to suburban sprawl and urban modernism, New Urbanism, it has been argued, is a design model more calibrated to the requirements of a democratic society. Evidence to support this conclusion was provided by considering such metrics as social capital, capabilities, non-discrimination, and sustainability. The design philosophy of New Urbanism—its sensitivity to local ecosystems, to basic human needs, and to the values of civic life—has been carefully outlined in a previous chapter and does not require another summary here. Instead, for the purposes of this conclusion, we will hone in on one design tenet that is central to the movement but has, thus far, been undertheorized. That tenet is design hybridization.

The phrase design hybridization, as used here, refers to an architectural/planning approach that seeks to mix and combine uses (residential, commercial, entertainment, and light industry), incomes (lower, middle, and upper via different residential price and design options), and modes of mobility (pedestrian, bike, auto, and public transport). The ultimate goal of this architectural and social alchemy is to create spaces that are tailored to a human scale—to maximize the fulfillment of human needs or, to borrow Nussbaum's conceptual framework, to maximize human capabilities. What needs to be highlighted here, because it has not been made explicit, is that hybridization denotes yet another affinity between New Urbanism and democracy, especially in its republican form, and this provides a further reason for this project's qualified support for it.

In Plato's *Republic,* Book Eight, we are introduced to the depressing spectacle of social and political devolution, in the case of Plato's work,

from a society led by philosopher kings to one led by a paranoid tyrant. While the ideal city that Plato sketches makes every possible effort to avoid this outcome—from the imposition of a carefully designed curriculum for the guardian class to an exacting program of eugenics—decay, it seems, is as unavoidable in human social life as it is in the biological sphere. Subsequent thinkers, from Aristotle to Polybius, from Cicero to Machiavelli, acknowledged and wrestled with this degenerative phenomenon. Polybius even gave this phenomenon a name, *anacyclōsis* (Walbank 1971). While these thinkers, all associated (excluding Plato) with a civic republican tradition, hoped to fully arrest this degenerative political disease, a more modest goal was to at least retard the process or to shock the patient back to life in times of crisis, to resuscitate or "re-found" the body politic. The basic strategy that emerged—there are, of course, nuanced differences, given these thinkers' different cultural milieus and historical settings—was to create a mixed or middle constitution, a strategy adopted not only by republican Rome but also by the British and, ultimately, the American constitution makers. Cicero's account, penned in the first century BCE, is emblematic of this approach: "For whereas the three forms of simple state which we mentioned readily lapse into the perverted forms opposed to their respective virtues—tyranny arising from monarchy, oligarchy from aristocracy, and turbulent ochlocracy from democracy—and whereas the types themselves are often discarded for new ones, this instability can hardly occur in the mixed and judiciously blended form of state…" (Cicero 1976, 151). Beyond the mere pragmatic aim of ensuring political stability, identified by the Roman thinker Cicero, the mixing of regime forms for the Greek philosopher Aristotle was tied to the loftier goal of promoting the good life, the life dedicated to the cultivation of the moral and intellectual virtues. This notion can be found in Aristotle's discussion of "polity" or the middle constitution (a combination of oligarchic and democratic elements) in the *Politics*, where he suggests that *if* human virtue is a kind of mean (between an excess or deficiency of a given appetite or emotion) as established in his *Ethics*—that is, if "the best life must be the middle life"—*then*, he asserts, the "same principles must be applicable to the virtue or badness of constitutions and states. For the constitution of a state is in a sense *the way it lives*" (Aristotle 1981, 266, emphasis added).

Just as the mix of institutions and humors within a constitution determines the way people live, so too the mix of architectural and landscape elements in our built environment determines how we live. And if these

republican thinkers are to be believed, and if the new urbanists are correct, then the key is to struggle toward the mean, to seek an architectural balance of public and private spaces and human uses consonant with our democratic way of life.

To be clear, the claim here is not that the new urbanists were the first or only group to seek this design balance. As we noted in the chapter on Jefferson, the agrarian intellectual tradition, stretching back at least to ancient Rome, portrayed cultivated spaces as the "middle landscape," poised between urban settlements and wild nature. At the turn of the twentieth century, Ebenezer Howard contended that his garden cities would offer the perfect blend of town and country—an argument carried forward by Wright (on behalf of Broadacre City) and others for the burbs more generally. Thus, while not the earliest or exclusive seekers of this elusive landscape balance, the claim is that new urbanists provide the most elaborate, comprehensive, and thoughtful attempt to date, that their design philosophy is better adapted to promote human flourishing in general and to support democratic life in particular.

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Index[1]

[1]Note: Page numbers followed by "n" refers to notes.

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