

Jodi Dean

# Democracy: A Knot of Hope and Despair

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## As Good as it Gets

A commonplace of media punditry in the twenty-first century concerns the deep divide in American politics. Whether in terms of political parties, red states and blue states, support or opposition to US militarism in Afghanistan and Iraq, or the ongoing culture war between the religious right and the secular left, the United States is depicted as a nation split in its fundamental ethico-political self-understanding.

This depiction is misleading. Each side of the divide appeals to democracy. The administration of George W. Bush presented itself as actively engaged in bringing democracy to the Middle East and as encouraging countries throughout the world to strengthen their democratic institutions. To this extent, it repeated the rhetoric of the twentieth century's two world wars as well as its cold war, positioning itself and its allies as democracies (as if Germany had not been a democracy on the eve of each of the European wars) and its enemies as, well, not democracies (as authoritarians, fascists, communists, terrorists, and, briefly, Islamo-fascists). The left, although seemingly opposed to the Bush administration, also appeals to democracy as that which it wishes to restore, redeem, or reach.

Since the left enabled the ideal of socialism to wither away with the Soviet state, what democracy might mean, or the range of possibilities democracy is meant to encompass, remains unclear, to say the least. The economic and social guarantees fundamental to social democracy and the welfare state don't feature prominently in most left discussions of democracy. More pronounced are themes of participation and deliberation, immanence and inclusion, ideals that are necessary but impossible, perpetually deferred, forever to come.

Why does the left continue to appeal to democracy? Is democracy, as Slavoj Žižek asks, the ultimate horizon of political thought?<sup>1</sup> Is reiterating the ideological message of communicative capitalism the best the left can do in the face of neoliberal hegemony and the collapse of socialism? Is democracy the fall back position for left politics, all that is left of our wounded and diminished political aspirations? Or does the hope its evocation promises mark instead a pervasive left despair? Is this as good as it gets?

Real existing constitutional democracies privilege the wealthy. As they install, extend, and protect neoliberal capitalism, they exclude, exploit, and oppress the poor, all the while promising that everybody wins. The present value of democracy relies on positing crucial determinants of our lives and conditions outside

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Richard Marquis, *American Acid Capsule with Cloth Container*, 1969-70. Glass and cloth (container by Nirmal Kauer [Barbara Brittel]). Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

the frame of contestation in a kind of “no-go zone.” These suppositions regarding growth, investment, and profit are politically off-limits, so it’s no wonder that the wealthy and privileged evoke democracy as a political ideal. It can’t hurt them. The expansion and intensification of networked communications technologies that was supposed to enhance democratic participation integrates and consolidates communicative capitalism. Nevertheless, the left continues to present our political hopes as aspirations to democracy.

Despite democracy’s inability to represent justice in the wake of political submission to a brutalized, financialized, punishing global market, left political and cultural theorists appeal to arrangements that can be filled in, substantialized, by fundamentalisms, nationalisms, populisms, and conservatism diametrically opposed to social justice and economic equality. Calling for democracy, leftists fail to emphasize the divisions necessary for politics, divisions that should lead us to organize against the interests of corporations and their stockholders, against the values of fundamentalists and individualists, and on behalf of collectivist arrangements designed to redistribute benefits and opportunities more

equitably. With this plea, leftists proceed as if democracy was the solution to contemporary political problems rather than symptomatic of them – that is the name of the impasse in which we find ourselves.

To the extent that the left – whether mainstream Democrats, deliberative democrats, radical democratic theorists and activists, or the typing left blogging and publishing in print media – accepts globalized neoliberal capitalism and acquiesces to a political arrangement inadequate to the task of responding to the gross inequality, immiseration, and violence this capitalism generates, it will fail to provide a viable alternative politics. Accordingly, this text explores the limitation of democracy as a contemporary political ideal, demonstrating how this organizational form and polemical concept serves highly particular interests and stands in the way of universalization.<sup>2</sup> It clicks on the links between contemporary theories of deliberative democracy (the most prominent democratic theories today) and the political arrangements of real existing democracy, arrangements that include activists and elected officials. While Hubertus Buchstein and Dirk Jörke present a persuasive account of the disconnect between highly professionalized (and commodified)

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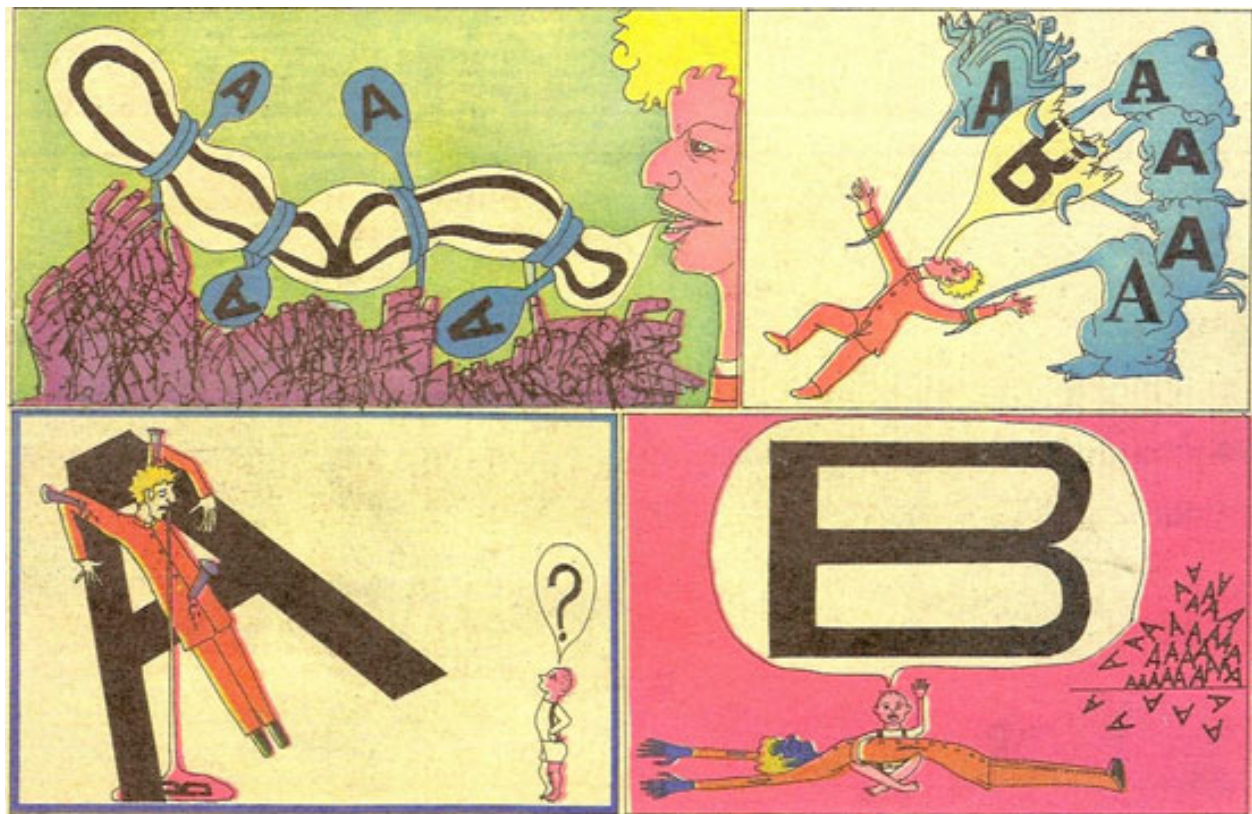


Plate from Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Fábulas Pánicas*, a weekly sunday cartoon designed by the artist for the *El Heraldo* between 1967-1973.

academic democratic theory and everyday references to and identifications with democracy, I highlight the overlap among these invocations of democracy, the coincidence between actual and ideal participation that ultimately undermines dynamic, responsive left politics.<sup>3</sup>

Theories of deliberative democracy tend to focus on the justification of democratic principles and practices. More than building models of democratic governance, they provide grounds that support claims for the superiority of democracy over other political arrangements. These grounds, moreover, have an interesting status. They are raised both in academic and popular debate, or, more precisely, *as both academic and popular debate*. Theories of deliberative democracy prioritize not simply claims regarding deliberation but actual practices of deliberation. For democratic theorists, then, there is a *necessary* link between theories and practices, a *necessary* connection to real life. Practices are legitimately democratic not when their outcomes can be imagined as the result of deliberation but when the practices are *actually* deliberative. Legitimacy follows from realization, from deliberative practice. And for democratic theorists the opposite holds as well: deliberative and democratic are the standards themselves determining legitimacy.

For example, crucial to Jürgen Habermas's principle of universalization is the idea that normative claims to validity are actually debated, that the justification of norms requires and results from the actual discourses of actual people.<sup>4</sup> With Habermas's emphasis on constitutional forms, on the one side, and the corresponding alliance between liberal and deliberative democrats, on the other, we have a contemporary theory that finds justificatory elements in real life political practices. Rather than providing rational reconstructions of everyday practices, the contemporary theory of deliberative democracy uses everyday practices as justifications for the validity of deliberative procedures.<sup>5</sup> Both normative and descriptive accounts of democratic procedures thus play key roles in theorists' accounts of deliberative democracy.

As it occupies this in-between space, one between facticity and validity, democratic theory presents ideals and aspirations as always already present possibilities. In so doing, it brings utopia inside, eliminating it as an external space of hope. Yet by internalizing the hope that things might be otherwise, democratic theory destroys that same hope: potential problems are solved in advance, through democratic channels. *We already know how to get there. We already have the procedures. Anything else is mere*

*tweaking*. Despite all our problems with democracy, democracy is the solution to all our problems.<sup>6</sup> The idea that democracy marks an empty place where things can be otherwise, that democratic procedures incorporate already the keys to revising and reforming the practice of democracy, becomes the conviction that there is nothing but, no alternative to, democracy. To this extent, democratic theory presents democracy as realized, as adequate to its notion. If this is the case, the problem is in the notion.

### Invoking Democracy

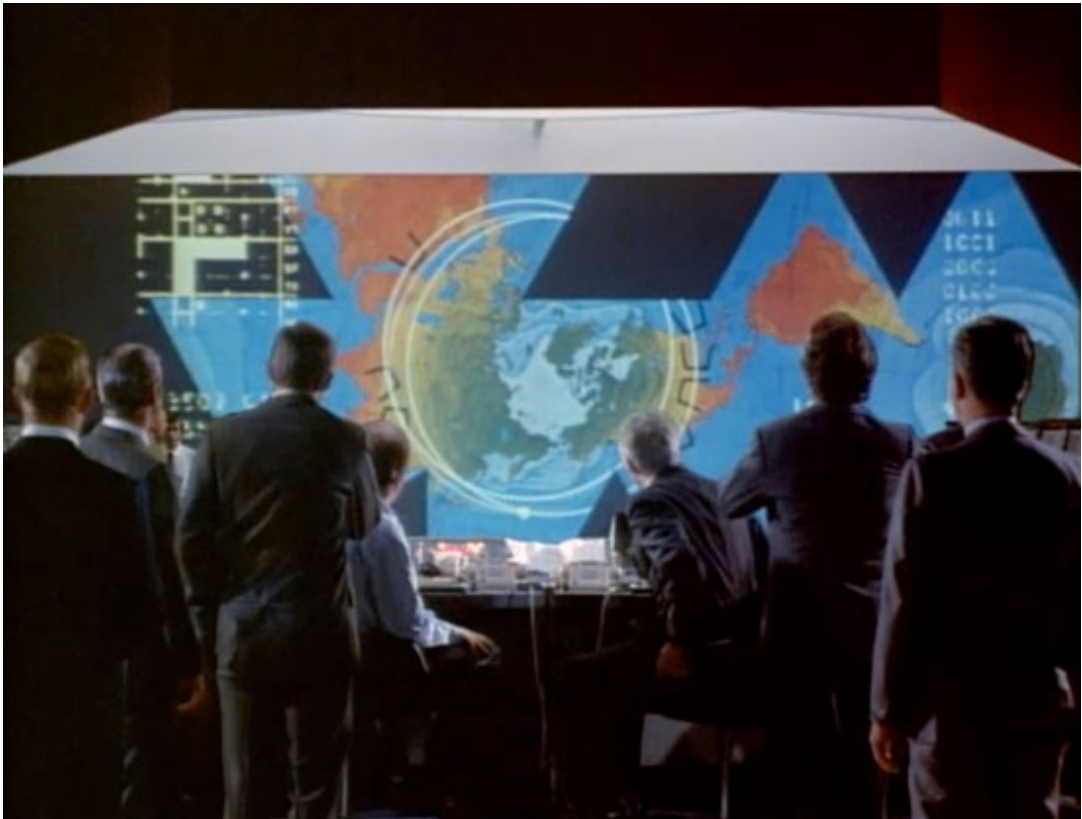
Democracy as a radical ideal was invoked by a sign posted in a coffee shop in Trumansburg, New York in early 2005. The sign urged people to "take back democracy." It advertised the showing of a film about Al Jazeera, *Control Room*, and called upon people to come inform themselves, discuss the film, and presumably, organize future actions. President George W. Bush invoked democracy as a political practice in a speech he gave in 2003. He proclaimed the role of the United States in spreading democracy across the globe, his strategy for democracy in the Middle East, and his hopes for the future of a democratic Iraq.<sup>7</sup> Citing the lessons of World War II and the Cold War, lessons that teach us that sacrifices made for the sake of democracy are worthwhile, Bush noted that "now we must apply that lesson in our own time. We've reached another great turning point – and the resolve we show will shape the next stage of the world democratic movement." In their well-known and influential description of the current academic consensus around deliberative democracy, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson invoke democracy as a theoretical justification for rule. They 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, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future."<sup>8</sup> As an example, albeit an admittedly imperfect one, Gutmann and Thompson refer to George W. Bush's recognition of a need to justify his decision to go to war, his persistence in making the case for preventive war against Iraq.

What might we make of these three invocations of democracy? A first pass might say that they are not talking about the same thing, that democracy, an empty signifier, is filled in with differing contents in each case. Here one might emphasize the differences between the protestors hailed by the sign in the coffee shop, the leader of a hegemonic power, and academics elucidating a second order account of legitimacy

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View of New York's Financial District from Governor's Island.

in politics. Yet even with these differences is it not the case that in each invocation democracy is somehow missing, outside the frame? That democracy is standing in for aspirations to something lacking in the present, something more than what we have?

Democracy is missing from the protestors' sign when we imagine them saying that their voices have not been heard, that Bush's decision to go to war violated American constitutional principles. The Bush administration violated democratic norms in going to war against the wishes of the majority. Yet, protestors are contesting this decision, saying that it was not in their name, that they do not authorize it, and that this lack of authorization is a lack of democracy. Democracy is outside Bush's frame when we recognize his self-image as a bringer of democracy, an instrument of the future. He looks outside of a present America, sees a global absence that threatens the United States, and acts to fill it. Democracy is missing from Guttman's and Thompson's account insofar as the argument they make is normative, a theory of how things ought to be, as opposed to how they are.

Guttman and Thompson summarize the most widely accepted view of democratic legitimacy, synthesizing decades of work by John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas. Although disagreements among democratic theorists remain, which Gutmann and Thompson rehearse in detail, the general idea is that democracy is properly conceived not in terms of the collective will of the people but in terms of the quality of collective will formation. Democracy, then, does not rely on a simple identity between government and the governed, sovereign and subject, but consists in a mediated relation between the two. Democracy, in this sense, is a matter of finding the proper procedures. For Guttman and Thompson, political theorists have failed to install these procedures and get them to work. They merely establish what these proper procedures *should be* if democracy is to hold.

But is the matter of missing democracy really so simple? Does it make sense to render each of the three cases above in terms of a democracy to come, as a missing utopia? What if instead we consider each case in terms of the presence or realization of democracy, as what an existing, real, democracy looks like,? When we do, we realize that protestors invoke a democracy imagined as resistance. They appeal to practices of constitutionally protected questioning and critique. The organizers showing the Al-Jazeera film are democratically engaged, active citizens. Like the protestors, Bush, too, is following and invoking a democratic script, carrying out his mandate. He is executing a

decision which, while necessarily in excess of the complex string of reasons and knowledge bearing upon it, takes place nonetheless within a space of power opened up and guaranteed by democratic procedures. And here, Gutmann and Thompson return as providers of insight into the knowledge of democracy. They don't decide to go to war or contest the decision of going to war. Rather they set out the procedures through which decisions should be made. And from their perspective, from the perspective of the neutral knowledge of the university, democracy is proceeding apace. This is what democracy looks like.

According to Gutmann and Thompson, the practices of the Bush administration exemplify the fundamental characteristic of deliberative democracy – the requirement to give reasons. They point out that the administration “recognized an obligation to justify their views to their fellow citizens” and that it gave reasons for preemptive war. These reasons, Gutmann and Thompson claim, “laid the foundation for a more sustained and more informative debate *after* the US military victory.”<sup>9</sup> As a commenter on my blog put it, it is as if they are saying “One good thing you can say about the war is despite all the death and destruction, it reinvigorates the postwar political debriefing process.”<sup>10</sup> Gutmann and Thompson concede that the administration did not exhaust non-military options before shocking and awing the Iraqi people. Nevertheless, they marvel that “the remarkable fact is that even under the circumstances of war, and in the face of an alleged imminent threat, the government persisted in attempting to justify its decision.”<sup>11</sup> They add that it is likely certain that “no amount of deliberation would have prevented the war.”<sup>12</sup>

### The Lack of Democracy

Both the missing and the present democracy readings are unsatisfying. Nevertheless, they are useful for elaborating a certain epistemological impasse in deliberative democracy, especially once we reread them in light of the different positions of enunciation at work in each explanation.<sup>13</sup> If we frame the issue as one of missing democracy, the protestors seem to take on the position of hysterics. Why? Because they address their claims to a master, challenging his authority as they say, one, we need democracy, democracy is not what we have, and, two, because the demands they make seem fantastic, incapable of being filled by the master they address.

The claim that democracy is missing is difficult to take seriously. An anti-war position was there, in the streets, vividly stated by the millions all over the world on February 15, 2003. A democratically elected Congress voted to

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authorize the President to carry out military operations should diplomacy fail. Where, then, is the failure of democracy? The emptiness of the concept of democracy is a problem insofar as it isn't clear what, exactly, the protestors might be demanding. What do they really want? Is it democracy or something else? And insofar as it isn't clear what the protestors are demanding, it seems impossible to give them what they do want.

We should also ask whether the screening of the film is really intended to inspire democratic debate. Are pro-torture, anti-Islamists expected and encouraged to attend? Is this an opportunity for Christian conservatives to explain the benefits of Fox News or try to organize those at the screening to evict anti-American tenured radicals from the university? Since the answer to these questions is obviously "no," the appeal to democracy seems disingenuous, a way of avoiding the true, partisan, position of the protestors, of masking the fact that their appeal is actually ruptured by a certain excess of power or desire that they can't fully acknowledge. The organizers of the screening don't really seek an inclusive conversation. They want organized political resistance, but they don't state this directly. Instead, they appeal to democracy, shielding themselves from taking responsibility for the divisiveness of politics.

Ultimately, insofar as the protestors address their demands to a master and fail to assume their own claim to power, they end up reinforcing rather than subverting the master's authority.<sup>14</sup> They don't confront Bush as an equal in political debate. They issue demands that the former president may accept or reject from his very position as their presupposed master. It is this very issuing of demands, moreover, which installs Bush into the position of master. Instead of screening a movie and demanding democracy, protestors could acknowledge the division between their position and that of the government – and at least half of American citizens at the time – and work toward building a militant counter movement or joining existing movements. They could refuse to play by the apparent rules of American political discourse and eschew the legitimizing shelter of the term "democracy."

If democracy is missing in the Middle East and Bush is the instrument through which it can be installed, his discourse is perverse and his position of enunciation that of the pervert.<sup>15</sup> Despite the demands of the hysterics, Bush is not a master. Or differently put, the demands of the hysterics demonstrate how the position of the master is always that of a fraud. His words fail to coincide with his position. And here, to an

extent, Guttman and Thompson are not wrong to emphasize the importance of continued questioning and argument for democracy. Such questions and arguments can expose the fact that the master is not a master; that his authority is a result of his position. And in this sense, it is relational rather than absolute.

The innovation of democracy is to draw attention to the distinction between the occupant and the place of power. As Claude Lefort argues, the key element of democratic invention is the assertion that the place must remain empty.<sup>16</sup> Principles of right and law guarantee this emptiness, maintaining the gap between the place of power and whoever occupies it. So, when Bush speaks he does not fully occupy the place of power. His word is not law. Rather, it is law who speaks and Bush carries it out. His position of enunciation is as an instrument of the law. Thus, he carries out the will and desires of others, not his own, in accordance with law. To do so, he too has to presuppose that he knows these desires. Here, we might think of Bush's frequent invocations of the Iraqi people and their desires for freedom and democracy. He too acts in behalf of them, to realize their desire for liberty. In helping them do so, he, like America, is a tool in the hands of nature and history. As Bush declared in his 2006 State of the Union Address, "We are the nation that saved liberty in Europe, and liberated death camps, and helped raise up democracies, and faced down an evil empire. Once again, we accept the call of history to deliver the oppressed and move this world toward peace."<sup>17</sup>

Read in terms of the pervert's discourse Bush's aim to spread democracy around the world relies on an excess of power, on a point of decision. As he stated when pressed by reporters to justify retaining Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld after six retired generals called for the Secretary's resignation, "I'm the decider."<sup>18</sup> It is this position that is supported by the knowledge he claims to subject himself to as he carries out its mandate to spread democracy.

I can now clarify how Bush's position as an instrument of a future democracy resists the exchange of reasons: insofar as he is merely the executor, he doesn't speak for himself or participate in the exchange of reasons. These reasons, or knowledge, already underpin his decision and are subject to his servicing of them. Bush addresses the subject, the protestors and the hysterical split subject of democracy, from his position as instrument. As such, the protesters' questioning misses the mark. He does not offer them knowledge; he offers them action. He therefore reiterates his decisiveness, his conviction, his resolve, his action in the service of a cause, principle, and design of

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nature that is incommensurate with his will. And as we have seen, this hysterical process produces, but does not depend on, the authority of the master. The pervert doesn't recognize himself in the address of the hysteric because he is merely an instrument.<sup>19</sup>

There is a way, however, that this reading of the protestors and Bush in terms of the discourses of the hysteric and the pervert is too rigid. Their positions are too fixed and are thus unable to account for the overlap in their claims regarding democracy's absence. Upon closer analysis, the fact that the two positions share a lack means that they each pass into the other.<sup>20</sup> With respect to the protestors' and Bush's examples, what occurs is the passing of questioning into decision, of inclusivity into division, and back again.

Žižek's discussion of Hegel helps clarify this shared lack. Žižek emphasizes that "antithesis" is "what the 'thesis' lacks in order to 'concretize' itself."<sup>21</sup> He writes, "the 'thesis' is itself *abstract*: it presupposes its 'mediation' by the 'antithesis'; it can attain its ontological consistency only by means of its opposition to the 'antithesis.'"<sup>22</sup> The protestors lack the power to execute their demands. Thus, their discourse only achieves consistency as a demand for power, that is, for what they in fact lack. They slide into their opposite in positioning themselves as vehicles for the realization of a democracy to come, in making their activities the practices constitutive of democracy, decisively excluding torturers, war mongers, and right-wing Christians from the democratic imaginary they thereby produce. These exclusions need to be emphasized, brought to the fore as such, as they are the very limits establishing the protestors' political ideal. To avow such exclusion, however, would shoot the fantasy of an inclusive, undivided democracy in the foot. As its own kind of political violence, such a decisive exclusion would force the protestors to abandon their stance as beautiful souls. Nonetheless, as hysterics, they refuse to acknowledge this element of their discourse, preferring instead to continue to question the master.

What about Bush? If he is simply the perverse instrument or executor of a larger law beyond himself, or of a greater will, how does his discourse achieve consistency? Via the insertion of questioning, via a hystericization – but not toward the protestors. Its relation to the latter is not complementary as the two sides of a synthetic whole. This lack of complementarity is clear when we recall that in neither the discourse of the hysteric nor that of the pervert are there claims made to some sort of equal. These discourses are not structured in terms of the exchange of reasons. Rather Bush's discourse is

hystericized in relation to a different position, from its point of symbolic identification, which is the point it sees itself from.<sup>23</sup> And this point is clearly that of its opponent, "Islamic fundamentalism" or terrorism, which the discourse itself elides. In effect, underlying Bush's position is a challenge to his opponent that both neurotically asks "are we who you say we are?" and perversely proclaims "we are not soulless, weak, materialist, consumerist, decadent, capitalist, imperialists." *There is more to us than reality television, McDonalds, and net porn. The, US, too, is resolute, strong, willing to fight to death, able to stay the course in a long, struggle with no end in sight. We are righteous. And I, as President, am the unwavering instrument of the higher law.*

For now, what is important is the gaze Bush imagines watching him when he speaks. The Other he imagines looking at, judging, the United States. In the 2006 State of the Union address, Bush avows, "By allowing radical Islam to work its will – by leaving an assaulted world to fend for itself – we would signal to all that we no longer believe in our own ideals, or even in our own courage. But our enemies and our friends can be certain: The United States will not retreat from the world, and we will never surrender to evil." Before this imagined gaze – primarily that of the enemy, the terrorist who would receive the signal that the US is sending – the willingness to die for freedom demonstrates that American freedom is not simply a market freedom, a decadent freedom to shop or choose from a wide array of colors, but something more, something as powerful as the conviction driving the so-called terrorist.

### Present Democracy

The idea that democracy is present, at least in its notion, took hold in the nineties. Socialism, the only apparent alternative to democracy, seemed barren, exposed as a costly, deadly, failed experiment. Expansions in networked communications technologies seemed to realize in material form the conditions necessary for deliberation. With more and more people able to increasingly access information, to register their opinions and participate in deliberation, how could any form of government but democracy even be possible? Of course, matters are not so simple. Some of the most repressive nations (Singapore, Indonesia) are some of the most heavily networked. Extensions in communication have been accompanied by, indeed rooted in, amplifications in capitalism.

As Gutmann and Thompson make clear, the idea that democracy is present justifies Bush's decision. He is acting out a mandate, exercising the people's will, carrying out the law. But what

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about the sign in the coffee shop? If we say that democracy is present, then the protestors' appeal to democracy makes no sense: why are they fighting for something that they have? Are they saying, "More of the same! More of the same!"? Clearly this is not what they are after and this is why their appeal to democracy is fruitless: it is an appeal to the status quo for more of the same, with an emphasis, however, on more – more information, more participation, more deliberation – as if sheer quantity could bridge the gap and produce a different outcome. To this extent, it falls into the traps of communicative capitalism, strengthening the very structures it ostensibly aims to change.

The protestors (and the left more generally) appeal to democracy because they look at it themselves from the same position of their opponents, the Bush administration (or the right more generally), just as the Bush administration looks at itself from the position of its opponent, the so-called Islamic fundamentalist or terrorist. And just as the Bush administration adopts the tactics of its opponent to try to fill the lack it sees – political will, moral rectitude, the resolve to name and confront evil – so does the left try to live up to, respond to, right versions of its failures. Avoiding the extremes, it puts itself in the middle. It isn't partisan, one-sided, or politically correct but fair and democratic, not a special interest group but in tune with mainstream American values. It isn't socialist (and really doesn't favor the welfare state), but instead committed to economic growth and free markets.

As the appeal to democracy presupposes democracy is the solution to its problems, because it incorporates in advance any hope things might be otherwise as its fundamental democratic promise and provision beforehand, it is a dead-end for left politics. Entrapped by such an appeal, left and progressive contestation remains suspended between the discourse of the hysteric and the discourse of the university. Such suspension fails to break free of the continued workings of the discourse of the pervert as hysterical contestation affirms the position of the master. Moreover, the appeal to democracy remains unable to elaborate a convincing political alternative because it accepts the premise that we already know what is to be done – critique, discuss, include, and revise. Left reliance on democracy thus eschews responsibility not only for current failures (*look, democracy isn't perfect*) but also for envisioning another politics in the future.

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Originally written in 2009, this essay is excerpted from Jodi Dean's book *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*, published by

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1  
For a thorough discussion of Žižek's critique of democracy, see Jodi Dean, *Žižek's Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

2  
I am drawing here from Ernesto Laclau's discussion of universalization under conditions of uneven power relations; see Laclau, "Structure, history, and the political," 182-212; and Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality, Universality* (London: Verso, 2000). Laclau argues that when power relations are uneven, universality depends on particularity, on the possibility of a particular element coming to stand for something other than itself. The supposition of democracy disavows the incommensurability necessary for universality as it presumes itself to be the solution to its problems – the answer to any problem with democracy is more democracy. For elaboration of this point, see Jodi Dean, "Secrecy Since September 11th," *Interventions* 6, 3 (2004) 362-380.

3  
Hubertus Buchstein and Dirk Jörke, "Redescribing Democracy," *Redescriptions* 11 (2007) 178-201.

4  
Jürgen Habermas, "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification," in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990) 66.

5  
See, for example, Simone Chambers, *Reasonable Democracy: Jürgen Habermas and the Politics of Discourse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

6  
This point applies to theories of radical democracy such as Laclau's and Mouffe's as well.

7  
See, for example, "Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy," (November 2003), at →.

8  
Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004) 7.

9  
Ibid., 2-3.

10  
See <http://jdeanicate.typepad.com, 2/28/05>.

11  
Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton, NJ:

Princeton University Press, 2004), 2.

12  
Ibid., 2.

13  
For the sake of clarity, I've omitted the specific Lacanian formulae for each of these discourses. A thorough elaboration appears in Žižek's *Politics*.

14  
Slavoj Žižek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle*, (London: Verso, 2004,) 133-145.

15  
Diane Rubenstein also reads Bush's relation to law as perverse. See *This Is Not A President* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 193-196.

16  
Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

17  
Text of address available here <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/01/20060131-10.html>

18  
"Bush: 'I'm the decider' on Rumsfeld," (April 18, 2006). Available at <http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/04/18/rumsfeld/>.

19  
In Joan Copjec's words, "The pervert is a pure, pathos-less instrument of the Other's will," *Imagine There's No Woman* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002) 229.

20  
See Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993) 122-124.

21  
Ibid., 122.

22  
Ibid., 122.

23  
For a more thorough argument on this point see Jodi Dean, "Enemies Imagined and Symbolic," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31, 4 (June 2005), 499-509.