

## ***Pragmatism, critical theory and democratic inclusion***

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article explores ideas from Richard Rorty and Nancy Fraser on the justification of democracy. It considers both as exemplary of what, following Michael Walzer, we can call philosophizing “in the city” – eschewing any aim to adopt a generalised, metaphysical perspective on questions of social justice, and seeking instead to locate these, in their conception and elaboration, in the thick of lived social practice. For such approaches, as for other treatments of democracy, issues around *inclusion* will be key: whose voices should count in the democratic conversation, and how? I address Rorty’s claim that democracy is “prior” to philosophy, rather than requiring philosophical backup, and Fraser’s notion of “participatory parity”. Endorsing Kevin Olson’s diagnosis in the latter of a “paradox of enablement”, I consider the inclusion of the disabled as a way of addressing how this paradox might work in practice. I conclude in section 4 by suggesting that escaping the paradox seems to require venturing to a vantage point further from the city than either Rorty or Fraser would prefer. I suggest that a capabilities-based approach would be one way of doing this – but that this, indeed, involves deeper “traditional”-style philosophical commitments than pragmatists will be happy to support.

### **0. Introduction**

At the opening of *Spheres of Justice*, Michael Walzer contrasts two methodological vantage-points, two directions in which social philosophers might direct their gaze: “One way to begin the philosophical enterprise – perhaps the original way – is to walk out of the cave, leave the city, climb the mountain, fashion for oneself (what can never be fashioned for ordinary men and women) an objective and universal standpoint. Then one describes the terrain of everyday life from far away so that it loses its particular contours and takes on a general shape. But I mean to stand in the cave, in the city, on the ground.” (Walzer 1983, p. xiv)

If these are indeed the available options, then pragmatists of course will take the second route, and follow Walzer into the city. The critique of abstraction, the focus on practice and the general project of starting out from “here” and “us” rather than some supposed Archimedean point, from the contingent rather than the absolute or ahistorical – all of these features of pragmatism mark it out, in Walzer’s terms, as a “ground-level” method. And this is symptomatic both of its appeal, and the nervousness with which

philosophers will often respond to it. In some respects that nervousness is entirely justified, at least for those keen on preserving loftier versions of the philosopher's role. If taken on board wholesale, the pragmatist sensibility shakes up the kind of thing that philosophy is, and makes trouble for many of its grander self-images as a privileged, masterly sphere of inquiry (see Calder 2003). Yet the idea that philosophy might start in the city is not, in some deep way, at odds with the whole idea of thinking about justice, or truth, or freedom. After all, such notions are *there* in the city – being invoked, doing work, graspable – just as they are in more elevated, distanced places. A question posed by Walzer's contrast is whether, standing in the city, one can operate solely within its walls. Can theory do its business without ever needing to “step outside” and retreat somewhere higher, to apprehend the “general shape” of things? Can one *see* enough, at ground level, to construct a robust, duly critical political stance?

One kind of objection to thinking solely “within the city” echoes a familiar complaint about pragmatism, arising in response both to the work of its first-generation proponents (Peirce, James, Dewey, Mead) and its late 20<sup>th</sup> century rearticulation by figures such as Richard Rorty. The complaint goes something like this. The combination of a prioritisation of (already existing) practice and the deflation of the critical pretensions of philosophy means that pragmatism “parochializes” critique and installs an unwarranted bias in favour of the social status quo. It forecloses inquiry by making in-place conventional belief the ultimate arbiter of any claim. Thus when James writes that “True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot.” (James 1995, p. 77), he is staking out a position which is intrinsically conservative, and immunises the status quo against radical challenge. This is because any such challenge will be either dismissed as non-assimilable, or duly assimilated, absorbed and so neutralised into the mainstream. The result is a kind of default lack of dynamism, a lack of room for dialectical movement. As the Frankfurt School critical theorist Max Horkheimer puts it, “if the idea of a dangerous, explosive truth cannot come into the field of vision, then the present social structure is consecrated” (Horkheimer 1993, p. 196). The opposition between first-generation pragmatists and their counterparts in the Frankfurt critical theory tradition thus centres on the question of whether there is reality, or objectivity, beyond the intersubjective affirmation of what is functionally useful in light of current dominant priorities. To the critical theorists, the pragmatists were guilty of “identity thinking”, to use Adorno's phrase: of conflating the object with our consciousness of it (see Adorno 1973; Calder 2007, ch. 1). In Walzer's terms, pragmatists seem to be mistaking the current horizons of what passes for wisdom in the city as the very limit of reality itself.

This article is about the implications of all of this for pragmatist accounts of democracy. My suggestion will be that whatever the appeal of city over mountain, we will always end up needing to move between the two. Thus for all the richness of Walzer's image, the dichotomy it suggests is a false one. This is not a generalised claim about the very nature and scope of philosophy. Rather, it is a reflection based on an exploration of two recent treatments of democracy by thinkers attempting, in their different idioms, to operate at ground-level, and free from loftier, shakier metaphysical commitments. Those thinkers are Rorty and Nancy Fraser. They are not considered theoretical bedfellows, by fans of their work or indeed by themselves. Fraser has made probing, illuminating criticisms of perceived tensions within Rorty's pragmatism (Fraser 1989) and of the mainstream of the tradition more generally (Fraser 1998). Meanwhile Rorty himself finds Fraser's work too theoretical, too much lured by the mountain, as it were (if not its summit, at least its lower slopes) to operate within an adequately post-metaphysical mode of political theorising – see Rorty (2008), especially pp. 77-8. Yet as I will argue, their positions are perhaps not as different – and their starting-points less distant – than these exchanges suggest. In fact, whatever her take on the specifics Rorty's own theoretical preferences, there is nothing in Fraser's recent work which is radically incompatible with a pragmatist orientation. It gives, as I shall argue, a strong, appealing account of what a pragmatist approach to certain political questions might look like. But it is not, as I shall also argue, thereby problem-free.

Section 1 looks at the role of inclusion and participation in democratic theory, accentuating their centrality for “city-level” theorists – and explores alongside this Rorty's notorious claim that democracy itself is “prior” to philosophy. Section 2 looks at Fraser's work, and in particular the extent to which it is compromised by what Kevin Olson has identified as a “paradox of enablement”. Put briefly, this paradox reflects the difficulty in including non-oppressively in the participatory process those in the weakest position to include themselves. In Section 3, I consider the example of disability as a way of addressing how this paradox, or something like it, might work in practice. I conclude in section 4 by suggesting that escaping the paradox seems to require venturing to a vantage point further from the city and up the mountain than either Rorty or Fraser would prefer. I suggest that a capabilities-based approach would be one way of doing this – but that this, indeed, involves deeper “traditional”-style philosophical commitments than pragmatists will be happy to endorse. Thus again: whatever the appeal of city-based philosophy – and pragmatism's take on this is always going to be amongst the very richest – we find, at least in exploring questions around participation and democracy, that we need to move between city and mountain more than pragmatists themselves will be ready to admit.

### 1. *The priority of inclusion to philosophy?*

In James Bohman's recent phrasing, "Democracy is that set of institutions and procedures by which individuals are empowered as free and equal citizens to form and change the terms of their common life together, including democracy itself" (Bohman 2007, p. 45). On this as on other definitions (of which there are of course many, but even so), questions of *inclusion* and *equality* are key to a working-through of what amounts to democratic practice. Thus, for Iris Young, "The normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making processes and have had the opportunity to influence the outcomes"—and included on equal terms (Young 2000, pp. 5-6, cf. P. 53). Democratic theory has become increasingly sensitive to issues surrounding the dynamics of all this, and less presumptive and generalised about the place and orientation of the political subject in the arena of democratic engagement. Especially in the wake of the "deliberative turn" — with its focus on "the ability of all individuals subject to a collective decision to engage in authentic deliberation about that decision" (Dryzek 2000, p. v) — we find nuanced attention to the ways in which differences in individuals' situations (along lines of gender, class, culture and otherwise) shape the kinds of participatory exchange and representation of different voices which democratic theorists savour. And much recent energy has been directed, specifically, towards enhancing the access of previously excluded voices to the democratic "conversation" (see e.g. Connolly 1991; Phillips, 1995; Young 2000; Calder 2006).

But inclusion of *whom*, and equality of *what*? What are the conditions of (genuine) participation in decision-making processes? And should we treat these as specific, philosophical questions to be resolved from a mountaintop vantage point before we venture down into the city to see how its attempts at democracy measure up?

For Rorty, the answer to that last question is no. In a piece originally written in 1984, and marking the beginning of the stage in which his work came to be taken seriously by "mainstream" political philosophers in the Anglo-American mode, Rorty seeks to disentangle philosophical questions — about rationality, the human subject, truth, the ultimate moral order — from the kinds of reasons which might commend liberal democratic institutions over their alternatives. While democracy "may need philosophical articulation," he insists, "it does not need philosophical backup": "On this view, the philosopher of liberal democracy may wish to develop a theory of the human self which comports with the institutions that he or she admires. But such a philosopher

is not thereby justifying these institutions by reference to more fundamental premises, but the reverse: He or she is putting politics first and tailoring a philosophy to suit.” (Rorty 1991, p. 178)

For Rorty this is just the way it goes – and is not something to get hung up about. To be sure, philosophy can furnish us with enlightening, progressive, efficacious ways of describing what a good society, and good citizens, would be like. Terms such as “rights” provide very useful ways in which to describe what seems most important. But we can use such terms without getting bogged down in metaphysical details. We can, in a resonantly Rortian phrase, “enjoy the benefits of metaphysics without assuming the appropriate responsibilities.” If we do, we will need non-philosophical resources on which to stake our distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable, right and wrong, reasonableness and unreasonableness in the behaviour of fellow citizens and others: “[W]e shall still need something to distinguish the sort of individual conscience we respect from the sort we condemn as ‘fanatical’. This can only be something relatively local and ethnocentric – the tradition of a particular community, the consensus of a particular culture. According to this view, what counts as rational or as fanatical is relative to the group to which we think it necessary to justify ourselves – to the body of shared belief that determines the reference of the word ‘we’. [...] For pragmatist social theory, the question of whether justifiability to the community with which we identify entails truth is simply irrelevant.” (Rorty 1991, p. 176)

Hence the priority of democracy – of defending and developing the political institutions and practices which contemporary liberals hold dear – to any foundations which philosophy might offer in its support.

There are various available lines of argument through which this case might be disputed. Here are three possibilities, none of which either entails nor is necessarily at odds with the others:

1. *That actually, devising democratic institutions and procedures does require prior philosophy.* Thus we simply will not be able to consider what makes for “good” institutions and procedures without already considering foundational, philosophical questions about what people are generally like (i.e., about the human subject) and how this relates to normative priorities such as freedom and equality – which themselves, need philosophical underpinning if they’re to be viable as concepts. Thus if democracy works at the institutional level, this will be because it rests on some kind of philosophically coherent basis – and so we just do need to think about the latter first.

2. *That any defence of democracy will in any case end up leaning on philosophy.* Here the claim is a deeper one: that there is an inevitability about making philosophical commitments inherent in the very nature of discussing democracy and its associated values. We cannot, then, justify democracy without getting our hands dirty, philosophically speaking. Metaphysical

questions are adhesive; we cannot escape their stickiness simply by preferring not to address them.

3. *That once up and running, the practice of democracy will rely on philosophical input/ understandings in order to work.* From this angle, the practice of democracy, to remain fair, just, and (as it were) true to itself, will require philosophical maintenance. It needs the kind of ad hoc reflection on deep theoretical questions – such as the nature of freedom and equality – which Rorty would lump in with metaphysics, but is part and parcel of doing justice to what purportedly makes democracy valuable in the first place.

All three lines are arguable at the “spectator” level, from a position some way up the mountain. Yet back in the city, it is not clear how they relate to the perspectives of citizens themselves. Do they care, in the end, whether there is some kind of ultimate philosophical corroboration either of the political system they operate under, or their own moral stances on this or that issue? Does the philosophical negotiation of such questions make any difference whatsoever to the “real-life” orientations of participants in democratic processes? At first blush at least, it seems entirely plausible to offer “no” as an answer to both of these questions. If this is a sustainable position, then we find that the lived experience of democracy in the city gives it enough of a grounding, without the need for any mountaintop perspective.

The appeal of pragmatism, then, lies partly in the offer of a focus on the practicalities of inclusion rather than theoretical nuance. If inclusivity and participation are so valuable, perhaps we should look at what they are like when they work well, and go with that flow, rather than formalising a theoretical model designed as a framework for practice, but which actual people may not recognise the validity of, or feel bound by. For Rortians, practice unites while theoretical debates divide: the former will be presented as providing the kind of social glue which the latter will always deny us. Theoretical power (“the force of the better argument”, in Habermas’s phrase – see 1990, pp. 158-9) does not motivate us into commitment to democracy like the practicalities of involvement in concrete social practices do (Rorty 2007). Inclusion – both in the sense of the individual’s orientation towards the polity in which they live, and in terms of the reach of that polity’s active membership – does not rely on theoretical underpinnings, either in its conception or its maintenance. As Rorty memorably says in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, the process of “coming to see other human beings as ‘one of us’ rather than ‘one of them’” is enabled not by theory, but by the redescriptive sources provided by “genres such as ethnography, the journalists’s report, the comic book, the docudrama, and, especially, the novel” (Rorty 1989, p. xvi). This is indeed a neatly fitting corollary of the severing of democracy from any necessary reliance on philosophy.

As will be seen, though, I am not sure that this account of things *works* – when we consider democracy in practice – in the ways Rorty would envisage. Later in this article, I will defend claims 2 and 3 above, and seek to show why in the end, they pose *practical* (and not just theoretical) problems for pragmatism.

## 2. *Fraser and the paradox of enablement*

Nancy Fraser’s work is often presented as being at the other end of the same lineage of critical theory which begins with Horkheimer and Adorno. In practice she is an adept inter-weaver of themes from this tradition with other resources, notably feminist and post-structuralist thinking. For my purposes here, I am primarily interested in what she has said about democracy and inclusion – and in how this relates to Rorty’s “take” on the relationship between democracy and philosophy. Of particular relevance is the priority she places, in sketching out a distinctive conception of social justice, on “participatory parity” – a way of spelling out the place of democratic inclusion in that wider scheme.

For Fraser, “justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers” (2003, p. 36). Parity means “the condition of being a peer, of being on a par with others, of standing on an equal footing” (2003, p.101 n. 39). The moral requirement is that “members of society be offered the *possibility* of parity, if and when they choose to participate in a given activity or interaction” (Ibid.). Fraser identifies two key impediments to participatory parity conceived on these lines (Fraser 2003; cf Fraser 1997). First: economic inequality, stemming from maldistribution of resources. And second: cultural misrecognition, stemming from a lack of regard for one’s particularity. Where other proponents of the crucial place of recognition in conceptions of social justice – most saliently Iris Young (1997) and Axel Honneth (2003) – treat recognition as the fundamental moral category, with distribution as derivative, Fraser recommends a “perspectival dualism” which “casts the two categories as co-fundamental and mutually irreducible dimensions of justice” (Fraser 2003, p. 3).

Now it is important in our current context to stress that Fraser herself presents participatory parity as an instance of “democratic pragmatism”. On the one hand, it is a universalist norm: it encompasses all adult partners to interaction, and it presupposes the equal moral worth of human beings (Fraser 2003, p. 45). But recognition itself in these terms is not wedded to some prior commitment to this or that philosophical conception of the human subject. It is “a remedy for social injustice, not the satisfaction of a generic human need” (Ibid.). As Fraser goes on to put it: “For the pragmatist, [...] everything depends on precisely what currently misrecognized people need in order to be

able to participate as peers in social life. In some cases, they may need to be unburdened of excessive ascribed or constructed distinctiveness. In other cases, they may need to have hitherto unacknowledged distinctiveness taken into account. In still other cases, they may need to shift the focus onto dominant or disadvantaged groups, outing the latter's distinctiveness, which has been falsely parading as universal. Alternatively, they may need to deconstruct the very terms in which attributed differences are currently elaborated. Finally, they may need all of the above, or several of the above, in combination with one another and in combination with redistribution. Which people need which kind(s) of recognition in which contexts depends on the nature of the obstacles they face with regard to participatory parity." (Fraser 2003, p. 47)

And as she adds, this "cannot be determined by an abstract philosophical argument", but only, instead, with a "critical social theory... that is normatively oriented, empirically informed, and guided by the practical intent of overcoming injustice" (Ibid.).

I cite all this at length to highlight the importance of two aspects of Fraser's case for participatory parity. Firstly: it is presented as a norm generated within the city, rather than up the mountain. It needs, in Rorty's terms, no "philosophical backup". Secondly, and on the other hand, it has a complex, shifting, multi-dimensional texture. What it takes to ensure parity will vary significantly, as she says, from case to case. To justify their claims, she says, "recognition claimants must show in public processes of democratic deliberation that institutionalized patterns of cultural value unjustly deny them the intersubjective conditions of participatory parity and that replacing those patterns with alternative ones would represent a step in the direction of parity" (Ibid.). What the norms of participation actually amount to will be deliberatively elaborated; this is how their substance emerges. This last point also highlights, however, a specific kind of circularity problem with Fraser's account.

The problem is partially acknowledged by Fraser, but especially well captured by Kevin Olson, who puts it like this: participatory parity "presupposes equal agency at the same time that it seeks to promote it" (Olson 2008, p. 261). Participation is the means by which claims to justice will be raised, and thus itself a kind of enabler of parity: it affords citizens not currently treated as peers the scope to argue for context-sensitive policies which will (as Fraser puts it above) "represent a step in the direction of parity". But here an irony emerges. Olson sets it out like this: "The people who most need to make claims about injustice, those who are politically disadvantaged in a given society, are the ones whose participatory parity is most at risk. They are most in need of parity-promoting policies. By definition, though, people who cannot participate as peers are precisely the ones least capable of making such claims. The problem, in short, is that deliberation

presupposes participatory parity at the same time that deliberation is supposed to set the standards for participatory parity.” (Olson 2003, pp. 26-61)

Olson calls this circularity “the paradox of enablement”. This occurs when “equally able citizens are both *presupposed* by deliberation and are its intended *product*” (Ibid.). (The paradox is a version of a wider, long-standing circularity problem about democratic legitimacy: for democratic institutions to be the result of the people’s will, they must pre-exist themselves, to enable that will to be registered in the first place. Or to put it the other way around, the people, to institute democracy, must be somehow prior to itself. On this point, see Gaon (2010).)

We can sum up the paradox of enablement like this: standards concerning what it is to participate, to be a peer, are themselves something to be produced through the participatory process. For participatory parity to be *participatory*, such norms cannot pre-date the process, but are engendered by it. They are thrown up by deliberations among the citizenry, not delivered pre-packaged from the mountain top. But for participatory parity to obtain at the point of deliberation, we must “presuppose equal agency in the processes through which it is formulated”. Inclusion, as it were, needs to be prior to itself for the process to work in the way Fraser expects of it. As Olson rightly points out, what we find here is an epistemological problem concerning the voices of the marginalised – which will not be heard, simply because they are not already equipped to participate on an equal footing. And such problems are starkest when they serve to prevent people from making claims about their own exclusion. Here “marginalization is not simply a violation of parity. It additionally deprives people of the means to demand inclusion” (Olson 2008, p. 262).

The norm of participatory parity is non-philosophical, in Rorty’s sense, in so far as it is generated not from some purportedly elevated theoretical vantage point but from within participatory processes themselves, i.e. through practice. To this extent, it seems authentically pragmatist. But it is also paradoxical. The claims of those not already equal may seem, within this model, like James’s “false ideas”: non-assimilable, and thereby exempt from contributing to the deliberative process. One can anticipate the voice of Horkheimer here: certain kinds of “dangerous” claim seem to be placed beyond the epistemic radar. What, if we are to sustain the ideal of inclusion, is to be done?

### *3. Disability, capability and the norms of participation*

The normative power of the notion of participatory parity lies in its orientation to include on an equal footing those who might otherwise be marginalised. There are of course a wide array of reasons for such exclusion, many arising from deep-laid aspects of social structure, and patterns of oppression. To work through the implications of the paradox of enablement, it is worth taking a specific example – something which Olson, perhaps ironically, does not in fact do, even as he meticulously rehearses different aspects of the paradox. Let us consider one category among those not fitting the classical (political philosophical) mould of the independent, self-sufficient agent: the disabled. Despite the general foregrounding of issues around inclusion, disability still tends not to feature in the mainstream of normative political theory – and neither recognition theory nor democracy theory, perhaps oddly, offer any exception in this respect (see, on this, Calder 2010). This is odd, as disability can in such obvious ways hook up with disadvantage in from the perspective both of economics (maldistribution) and culture (misrecognition). People with disabilities are among the most likely in society to be economically vulnerable, and not to be recognised as being on an equal footing. They thus provide a prime example of those whose participatory parity is most at risk.

Accounts of the politics of disability in the contemporary west are often rendered in terms of the story of the social model. The social model of disability emerges in the work of theorists attached to the disability rights movement. Its origins are usually traced to a declaration by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in 1976. This marked out physical disability as a form of social oppression, centred particularly in exclusion from the employment market (UPIAS 1976, p. 14). The social model is conventionally contrasted with the more individualized “medical model” taken to be historically dominant in institutional practice. In the latter, bodily impairment is presented as the initial cause in a causal chain which may issue in functional disadvantage. Thus the biomedical condition (such as visual impairment) was conceived as a kind of given – a “personal tragedy” the effects of which it is the job of expert professionals to mitigate (Morris 1991, p. 180). For proponents of the social model, its dominant, individualized counterpart is itself disempowering. By focusing attention on the individual condition and the limitations it imposes, it distracts from the ways in which social factors – “environments, barriers and cultures” (Oliver 2009, p. 45) – disable. It thus neglects the extent to which disability might be addressed not by searching for elusive “cures” for physical impairments, or helping individuals adapt to their own particular burden, but instead through reform of those social factors which would allow for the de-victimization of the

disabled and a positive affirmation of difference in place of the presumption that impairments themselves impose an inherent disadvantage. Thus for UPIAS, impairment is physiological but disability is “the disadvantage of restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities” (UPIAS 1976, p. 14).

The social model is a powerful tool, and a controversial one. On the one hand it has been subject to a good deal of debate among proponents of disability rights, along both philosophical and political lines – see, *inter alia*, Barnes and Mercer (2010), Cole (2007), Oliver (1990, 2009) Shakespeare (2006), Smith (2005), Swain et al (2003), Terzi (2004). On the other hand it has (and this is the cause for some ambivalence in the disability rights movement) been adopted with remarkable speed into institutional frameworks and indeed government legislation. Thus in the contemporary UK, versions of the social model find official articulation both in the “diversity policies” of public institutions, and in successive pieces of equality legislation – most recently, the Equality Act 2010. The presumptive focus is shifted from individuals bearing impairments to institutions which might themselves disable, and which are given a responsibility proactively to minimise the ways in which they might. All of this is significant, in our current context, precisely because of the aim at stake: a form, in Fraser’s terms, of participatory parity. In particular, internally diverse ways, disabled people have historically been on the end of a kind of pincer movement between Fraser’s two key impediments to parity: maldistribution and misrecognition. The social model itself emerges from political practice, and is pragmatic in orientation: it is a strategy for barrier-removal, for reform of environments and attitudes.

It is also a prime case study with regard to the paradox of enablement, in the way that Olson frames this. Thus, again: for participatory parity to obtain at the point of deliberation, we must “presuppose equal agency in the processes through which it is formulated”. Now for its proponents, of course, the whole *point* of the social model is that such parity has not obtained with regard to the disabled. Thus if there has been an adjustment of the terms of participation – of the conditions for inclusion, and the presumptions about equality and agency inherent in all of this – then this has happened *despite* a lack of prior parity. One might draw a sporting analogy. Say we are involved in a game running according to given rules of participation, which themselves are partial and presumptive as regards the scope for the physically impaired to be included. The social model emerges as a theoretical challenge to these presumptions, and to the existing norms of the game. It challenges their purported neutrality, and seeks to show that they are exclusionary in an arbitrary, unfair way which runs against both the spirit of the game and wider normative considerations. The articulation of the social model thus seems to

demand a re-think in the name of equality of opportunity, involving starting the game afresh according to adapted rules. But to instigate this on Fraser's terms, the disabled would-be participant needs recourse to prior or overarching rules which trump the given history of participatory exchange thus far. It is not clear where these can come from. If the terms of participatory parity must themselves emerge from the deliberations of the already included, it is not clear how the voice of those excluded enter into the picture, except at the behest of those already "in on the conversation". It relies on their capacity for imagination, their goodwill, their sense of inclusivity, and other contingencies – but it cannot be guaranteed by the prior framing of rules which, precisely, have not taken into account the proposition posed by this alternative model. If the social model is to be successful in transforming the rules of the game, it needs to find a way of speaking from outside those rules, in such a way that existing participants are persuaded of the need to expand their parameters, and to include those who hitherto have been least able to participate within them. The social model here presents a "dangerous" claim, in Horkheimer's sense. The concern about Fraser's model is that, echoing those initial qualms about first-generation pragmatism, it insulates itself against such claims even while its spirit suggests that it should be geared towards their inclusion.

So we have, here, an example of how the paradox of enablement might work in practice. What is striking about this example is that in political reality, the social model has in many ways been a successful intervention. Of course, political reality is by no means characterised by the kinds of prior guarantees of participatory parity which Fraser favours in her ideal model. The social model has imposed itself despite a range of vested interests, structural inequalities and operations of power which have in important ways been pitted against it. Why might this have happened? Clearly, it has presented a forceful case. It seems, though, that acceptance of the force of the case means getting outside of the game as it is running, outside the city limits, and considering things from an angle beyond current terms of participation. In Walzer's terms, it means going at least part of the way up the mountain. And in terms of Rorty's case for the priority of democracy to philosophy, this points, I think, to the strength of two of the possible lines of argument against that claim – numbers 2 and 3, as given above.

Taking Fraser's model of participatory parity as exemplary of a particularly refined, elegant and appealing version of what democracy might amount to: can it operate without philosophical backup? I would suggest not. To defend it, to work through its implications, to ensure that it does not involve some kind of pre-emptive exclusion of marginalised voices, or effect such exclusions in practice – all of this requires that we lean on philosophy in a broad sense. We cannot justify it without getting our hands dirty in this way – for example, by considering what exactly counts as disability. The social model

raises metaphysical questions, as part of its political project. It is a persuasive philosophical case. If it is right, it changes the terms of existing debates on inclusion. It does this in part by virtue of its philosophical power, and the subtlety of its take on questions of structure and agency, physiology and subjectivity, cause and effect, freedom and determinism, the nature of respect, and so forth. If taking the social model seriously is a requirement for purportedly “inclusive” paradigms of democratic engagement, then we need to acknowledge that the relationship between philosophy and democracy is not as incidental, or characterised by the kind of mutual independence, that Rorty suggests. Now it may of course be that the rhetorical influence of the social model is best achieved if it is presented not in the idiom of theory, but of the “docu-drama or the comic book”. But the point is that its coherence, its relation to the purported norms of a polity, its deeper case for a revision of our understanding of the relation between individuals and their environments – all of these are factors the outworking of which requires exactly the kinds of philosophical analysis and dispute which Rorty deems extraneous, and something to be saved for weekends. The relation between theory and practice is not, as we confront practical political reality, as bifurcated as the very possibility of separating out democracy and philosophy would suggest.

#### 4. *Capabilities and the boundaries of inclusion*

None of this is to question the appeal of Fraser’s notion of participatory parity, or indeed of the pragmatist priority of practice over theory. It is, though, to suggest that theory haunts the practical negotiation of politics in ways which are inconvenient to the kind of full-on demotion of philosophy to a kind of luxury side-show which Rorty’s picture of democracy offers. To put it more strongly: to prioritise practice is itself a theoretical commitment, and one which requires theoretical negotiation if it is not to generate problems for itself. The notion of inclusion is a particularly fertile example to use in this respect, precisely because its meaning is not self-evident enough, in some a priori way, for an inclusive politics to be achieved or sustained without recourse to the kinds of philosophical maintenance which, on an account such as Rorty’s, are supposed to be superfluous. Philosophy on a modest scale is something which we cannot escape our entanglement with as we negotiate the political playing out of any given model of democracy.

As for the paradox of enablement, one implication it poses, I think, is that we need a degree of commitment to certain meta-principles in order to escape the more pernicious aspects of this particular kind of dead-end. Inclusion is not a value in itself, or regardless of the terms on which it takes place, or who is included, or what voices gain “airtime” in the process. It is a value in so far as

it promotes some kind of first-order good, or goods. If we consider the politics of the disability rights movement, we find a good example of why this is so. It is not that inclusion in the mainstream – in terms of employment, or social participation in other ways – is valued for its own sake by proponents of the social model. After all, the mainstream may not itself be such a great place. Being in the thick of the city can be liberating, but it can also be oppressive. Being on the inside isn't always so great. Rather, inclusion is valued because it is presumed to offer goods conceived as having prior, non-contingent value. We might talk here of autonomy, of solidarity, of citizenship. For my part, I think the most helpful language here is that of capability, in the sense in which Amartya Sen uses the term (see Calder 2010). For Sen, “what matters to people is that they are able to achieve actual *functionings*, that is the actual living that people manage to achieve” (Sen 1999, p. 74). Crucial here is “the freedom to achieve actual livings that one can have a reason to value” (Ibid, p. 73), and thus “the *capabilities*... to choose a life that one has reason to value” (p. 74 – my emphasis).

I will not offer here some comprehensive case for considering capabilities as the best rubric for thinking about the kind of good which might lie prior to inclusion, give a reason for commending it, and provide a yardstick by which the playing-out of participation might be gauged in terms of its contribution to well-being. The basic suggestion is just that *some* such rubric is required in order to escape the clutches of the paradox of enablement, and also those surrounding the commendation of democracy more generally. It is not that participatory parity itself can be the source of the value of participatory parity, or that democracy itself explains the value of democracy. Rather, democracy will be valuable, if it is, because it delivers things which are conceived as valuable in a prior way. The case for extending the boundaries of inclusion is that it “does justice” in some sense, to some prior value. Now again, what that prior value *is*, is of course disputable. What pragmatism cannot do, in promoting the centrality of practice, is avoid getting tangled up in questions about what it is valuable about practice. If at this stage we insist that our negotiation of such questions can be done, as Rorty suggests, only in terms “relatively local and ethnocentric”, this traps us in the paradox of enablement. To put it another way, if enablement is what makes inclusion valuable, we need a prior account of what counts as enablement which takes priority to the value of inclusion itself, and to which the latter serves as a conduit. It may be, as the example of the social model suggests, that doing justice to our commitment to whatever it is that inclusion is supposed to deliver will require us to re-structure the environment in which democratic participation takes place.

But such an approach will involve “philosophical” commitments disallowed by both Rorty and Fraser – the kind of generalised consideration of the

conditions of well-being, and thus of “the human subject”, which will require an excursion from the city, at least part-way up the mountain. There is a circularity about democracy from which only a recourse to “prior philosophy” seems to offer an escape.

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