



Walzer and Justice: Spheres of Justice in the 2020s

Edited by
J. Toby Reiner

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“Michael Walzer’s *Spheres of Justice* was a bombshell of a book in the field of political theory when it was published in 1983. Four decades later, Walzer’s theory has become even more influential, not just because of its philosophical insights, but also because it helps us to think in practical ways about how to promote social justice in the modern world. Read this book by leading political theorists to find out more!”

—Daniel A. Bell (*University of Hong Kong*), *Chair Professor of Political Theory, Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong, Distinguished Chair Professor of Fudan Institute for Advanced Study in Social Sciences*

“The idea of justice means different things in different spheres of life. In the age of capitalist globalization, one must consider how such an idea is exchanged, commodified, and performed. The contributors to this volume are committed to this task. By rereading *Spheres of Justice* forty years after its publication, they demonstrate that social liberalism makes it possible to tackle epistemic conflicts over the idea of justice, a prerequisite for peace and the pursuit of a decent life. A timely and indispensable work.”

—Bruno Perreau (*Cynthia L. Reed Professor of French Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology*)

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book emerged out of a seminar held in October 2023 at the **Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton**, to mark the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Spheres of Justice*, **Michael Walzer's** seminal account of **distributive justice**. We wrote it to demonstrate the enduring contribution and ongoing relevance of Walzer's account of **social democracy** at a time when it is in retreat across much of the world. Many of Walzer's arguments seem to us to contain the resources to revitalize leftist and **egalitarian politics** and to provide alternatives to right-wing **populism** that can win the allegiance of democratic citizens by virtue of their appeal to indigenous norms that they share.

We are grateful to the Institute for hosting and supporting the seminar, and especially to Wendy Brown, Laura McCune, and Miriam Harris for their help with the arrangements. Thanks also to *Dissent*—the intellectual magazine that Walzer edited for 40 years—for participating in the seminar, and especially to Michael Kazin, Mark Levinson, Mitchell Cohen, Jo Ann Mort, Nick Serpe, Natasha Lewis, and David Marcus for their interest in and encouragement of our endeavors. Bruno Perreau presented a paper at the conference on the importance of Walzer's work for **left-wing politics** today. The editor also wishes to thank Daniel Bell, Avner de-Shalit, Sarah Song, Nicola Lacey, Elizabeth Fraser, Joseph Blasi, Graham Parsons, and Marcus Agnafors for helpful discussion of this project.

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Carlisle, USA

J. Toby Reiner

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J. Toby Reiner is Associate Professor and Chair of Political Science at Dickinson College. He has a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley and an MPhil in International Relations from the University of Cambridge. He wrote a book on Michael Walzer as part of Polity Press's series on Key Contemporary Thinkers (Polity, 2020). His book on Community for Polity's series on Key Concepts will be published in 2025. He has published in various journals, including *Political Research Quarterly*, *Polity*, *American Political Thought*, and the *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*. He is currently working on a book manuscript on migration and global justice.

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Introduction

J. Toby Reiner

Michael Walzer's *Spheres of Justice*¹ (1983) is a landmark work in post-war political theory that changed the way in which scholars think about equality and about distributive justice. Walzer advances a “rich and compelling”² social-democratic conception of distributive justice that he calls “complex equality” (Walzer 1983: 3–30), which seeks to reconcile egalitarianism with the pluralism of contemporary life, both across and within diverse cultures and societies. As a social-democratic account of distributive justice, *Spheres* is the most important counterpoint to both John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971)³ and Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974),⁴ the classic statements of left-liberalism and libertarianism in recent Anglophone theory.

This book is dedicated to demonstrating the on-going relevance of *Spheres* both to theorizing about distributive justice and to social-democratic politics in the twenty-first century. It emerges out of a seminar on *Spheres* held at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey—where Walzer worked while he wrote the book—in October

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2023. The seminar marked the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Spheres*. There are contributors from the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands, who tackle a broad array of Walzer's arguments, relating to equality, immigration, shared understandings, philosophical interpretation, workplace rights, pluralism, and polarization. Social democracy—and even left-liberalism—has been in retreat across the region in recent years, thanks to the electoral success of the populist right. Yet *Spheres* was written in 1983, in the middle of Reagan's first term, which was hardly the heyday of social democracy. It is our contention that Walzer's approach offers fruitful avenues for a revitalized left politics and political theory in an era of polarization, one that can uncover areas of deep consensus that underlie our surface disagreements and ground a revitalization of egalitarian politics for today.

Similarly, Walzer's theory continues to make major contributions to political theory. Then, as now, liberal theories such as those of Rawls and Nozick represented the mainstream, agenda-setting positions in political theory and philosophy, at least on matters of socio-economic justice. Some of Walzer's most significant overarching contributions offer alternatives to positions that are shared by both egalitarian liberalism and libertarianism. Walzer's attention to pluralism leads him to argue that goods have distinctive meanings that vary across different "spheres" of social life and that goods should be distributed in accordance with those sphere-specific meanings (Walzer 1983: 6–10). He thus sets out to analyze the social meanings of a wide range of prominent goods, including money and commodities (95–128), political power (281–311), office (129–640), education (197–226), security and welfare (64–94), and membership (31–63), as well as goods less frequently studied by political theorists, such as kinship and love (227–42) and divine grace (243–48). As a result, Walzer's book makes contributions to most of the major debates in political philosophy. Indeed, Walzer's attention to social meanings led him to focus attention on topics such as immigration, citizenship, multiculturalism, employee relations, and hard work long before they became the major research areas in political thought that they are today. Moreover, Walzer's engagements with disciplines such as anthropology, history, and sociology make *Spheres* resonate powerfully beyond political theory and philosophy.

Notably, complex equality conceives of equality as a political relationship that breaks with patterns of oppression and domination (Walzer 1983: 10–13), or as a "complex relation of persons" rather than "an

identity of possessions” (18). Related to this, in conceiving of goods as social products, Walzer makes community central to an understanding of distributive justice.⁵ In addition, Walzer’s method of analyzing the meaning of social goods breaks with the universalism of much traditional political philosophy, suggesting in its place an interpretive method of social criticism, in which theorists start from the social meanings of their fellow citizens but argue that current practices fail to do justice to those deeper understandings.⁶

Both Walzer’s interest in social and political context and his understandings of equality and of social criticism reflect *Spheres*’ debt to public-intellectual debate: Walzer wrote the book while editing *Dissent*, the social-democratic magazine of the New York Intellectual community.⁷ Walzer continued to edit *Dissent* until 2013 and still writes for it. He has also written frequently for outlets such as the *New Republic* and the *New York Review of Books*. In these forums, he extended and developed many of the arguments of *Spheres* in response to subsequent developments. Summing up the relationship between his political theory and his public-intellectual work, Walzer argues that there is a “political theory license” that allows scholars to stake out politically engaged positions in ways denied to almost all other academics.⁸ Pursuing this license makes Walzer’s work of continuing interest and concern to both scholars and intellectuals and has led to a series of books and articles dedicated to *Spheres* and to Walzer’s work more broadly in recent years.⁹ Furthermore, Walzer’s engaging and elegant prose often makes political theory come alive to readers new to the subject. *Spheres* is of enduring relevance and contains the resources to help us think afresh about the predicaments of social democracy and left politics and theory in challenging times.

THE ARGUMENT AND CONTRIBUTION OF SPHERES

The most distinctive feature of the conception of distributive justice that Walzer develops in *Spheres* is that, rather than proposing a series of principles that are to apply to the distribution of all goods, he proposes that different goods be “distributed to different people for different reasons.”¹⁰ This makes for a great variety of distributive principles that vary with the meaning of goods and across both time and space (Walzer 1983: 6–10).¹¹ Walzer grounds this pluralism in the argument that justice is a “human construction” (Walzer 1983: 5) that begins with the conception and creation of goods, and can only then develop principles of

distribution (6–8). Goods, on Walzer’s account, are not “idiosyncratically valued,” because their conception and creation are “social processes” that produce shared meanings within a society even as goods mean different things in different societies (7–8). The conception and creation of goods are among the central phenomena in any society, because it is through our relationship to goods that we develop our “concrete identities” and become “recognizable” as individuals (8). As a result, a theory of distributive justice cannot proceed in abstraction from the political, philosophical, and economic debates within societies. These debates are what give meaning to the goods that are the objects of the theory, as well as giving the subjects who are to distribute the goods among themselves the materials out of which to fashion their identities. Social meanings provide the criteria by which goods should be distributed, for Walzer contends that distributive principles follow from the meanings of goods (8–9).¹² For this reason, the bulk of the argument of *Spheres* consists of an examination of the meanings of the most important contemporary social goods. Walzer holds that, “If we understand what [a good] is, what it means to those for whom it is a good, we understand how, by whom, and for what reasons it ought to be distributed” (9–10). Thus, Walzer concludes, theories of distributive justice should focus on goods and their relationship to the people who hold them, not on comparative assessment of distributive principles, conceived generally and abstractly.

Walzer argues that distributing goods for reasons relevant to their social meaning will produce complex equality because, although there may and in fact must be inequality of possession within each sphere, citizens will not be “unequal generally” (Walzer 1983: 19) so long as those inequalities are confined to the appropriate sphere.¹³ Equalizing possessions within any one sphere will produce only “simple” equality by preventing people from monopolizing certain goods (13–17), whereas the true egalitarian task is to prevent particular goods—above all, money and political power—from becoming socially dominant (10–13). When goods achieve dominant status, their possessors can achieve a social status inimical to the development of a society of equals, dominating society by using those goods that they rightfully possess to gain access to all sorts of other goods with which they stand in a more distant relationship. This creates the sort of subordination that egalitarians seek to prevent, chasing instead a world with “no more bowing and scraping; fawning and toadying; no more fearful trembling; no more high-and-mightiness” (xiii). To prevent domination, and establish egalitarian relationships, we must

prevent goods from accruing to people because of those people's relationship to other goods, for domination "is always mediated by some set of social goods" (xiii). Walzer thus reformulates the doctrine of right reasons, whereby goods are distributed for reasons relevant to their meaning, in negative terms, arguing that equality depends on ensuring that "*No social good x [be] distributed to men and women who possess some other good y merely because they possess y and without regard to the meaning of x*" (20). If this occurs, we will live in a complexly egalitarian society.

Simple equality—in which possession of important goods such as money is equalized—will not, on Walzer's account, last, because people's decisions will soon render possession unequal again (Walzer 1983: 14).¹⁴ This would be a problem for egalitarians, Walzer contends, only if the same people won out in every sphere (Walzer 1983: 20; see also Walzer 2007: 81–95). Walzer acknowledges that the "subtle and indirect" convertibility of social goods (Walzer 2007: 83) across lines of class, ethnicity, and race may make such hierarchy appear likely in a capitalist society (87). Yet he argues that the range of human talents and goods makes it in fact unlikely. Consider, first, the different skills: "intelligence, physical strength, agility and grace, artistic creativity, mechanical skill, leadership, endurance, memory, psychological insight, the capacity for hard work—even, moral strength, sensitivity, the ability to express compassion" (Walzer 1980: 239–40). Each of these talents might well be distributed unequally along a bell curve, but if they are all distributed along the *same* bell curve, then equality is a chimera, and it is worth making a "democratic wager" that they are not (Walzer 2007: 92). Consider, next, the various goods we might wish to acquire: "Political power, celebrity, admiration, leisure, works of art, baseball teams, legal advice, sexual pleasure, travel, education, medical care, rare books, sailboats" (Walzer 1980: 239–40). We have different entitlements to each of these because different reasons are relevant to the distribution of each. For example, while in contemporary society, the appropriate reason for forming a romantic relationship is love and affection, such a reason amounts to nepotism or cronyism when it infiltrates the sphere of public office (Walzer 1983: 234–39; 147–48). Even if talents are unequally distributed overall, we can discern this only by investigating each talent as it relates to each good, and so there is no getting away from an approach to distributive justice that proceeds with reference to distinct social goods. This is especially because some of the relevant reasons for possessing a good are nothing to do with any sort of talent but depend entirely on

relational standing. For example, one of Walzer's most famous arguments is that medical care should go to the sick (Walzer 1983: 86–91).¹⁵ Distribution on the basis of health is a form of distribution for right reasons, but not one to which notions of merit are relevant at all. It is, rather, a form of distribution in accordance with need, but need, too, will not work for the distribution of all goods (Walzer 1983: 25–26).

In short, the argument for complex equality is an argument for pluralism of both skills and meanings, and for a relational approach to both equality and distributive principles. Walzer's other major contribution—the insistence that social meanings, and hence principles of justice, vary across cultures (see especially Walzer 1983: 312–16)—is in part a consequence of his theory of goods. If goods are produced by groups of humans in specific settings, it follows that goods will have different meanings in different societies. For example, Walzer notes, bread can be “the staff of life, the body of Christ, the symbol of the Sabbath, the means of hospitality” (8), etc. Non-natural products will not only have different meanings but be different goods. If the relevant principles of distribution follow from a good's meaning, then distributive principles will vary as goods and their meanings do. Offices and positions of responsibility can be treated as something to which the principle of equality of opportunity should apply only once those offices have been created. Moreover, they rely on the notions of the career and of life being lived according to a plan—both of which are modern ideas that are products of liberalism and of capitalism (Walzer 1994: 22–24).¹⁶

Walzer's argument for a more contextual approach to distributive justice, paying attention to specific goods in the settings in which they are created and used, offered a corrective to the abstract universalism of dominant accounts from the liberal tradition, in both its egalitarian and its libertarian guises. Walzer's theory of goods counters Rawls's notion of “primary goods,” those things that all people need if they are to pursue their goals, whatever those goals happen to be (Rawls 1971: 54–55; c.f. Walzer 1983: 8–9). On Walzer's account, there are no such goods, because the range in social meanings is so great that almost anything might be necessary for the pursuit of our life plan, and almost nothing will be essential to all such plans. Even foodstuffs only meet this requirement in situations of extreme necessity, and “even there, we can't be sure. If the religious uses of bread were to conflict with its nutritional uses—if the gods demanded that bread be baked and burned rather than eaten—it is by no means clear which use would be primary” (Walzer 1983: 8; see also

1994: 21–40).¹⁷ Universal principles based on appeal to universal goods must give way to particular principles based on contextual investigation of specific goods in specific contexts.

Walzer's critique of philosophical universalism departs from liberalism not only in the particularism of his conclusions but also in rejecting the abstraction of its methods. In developing his contractual theory of justice, Rawls starts by positing that parties to the contract reason from behind a "veil of ignorance" that denies them knowledge of any of the particularities of their situation and personality. Rawls argues that permitting such knowledge would introduce illegitimate bargaining advantages into negotiations on the contract and would produce outcomes based on morally arbitrary reasons (Rawls 1971: 17–22; 118–92). Rawls's theory seeks to produce principles that are fair to everyone, but the abstract way in which he cashes this out sets up, in Walzer's view, a clash between political theory and democratic prerogative.¹⁸ Nozick's theory starts by presupposing the context of Locke's depiction of the state of nature (Nozick 1974: 9–12) and seeking to consider whether residents of such a state of nature might avoid establishing a state as quickly as Locke has his do (12–15). Nozick concludes that a minimal state would inevitably emerge from a clash between private protection agencies (22–25). Bruce Ackerman and Ronald Dworkin also base their theories on hypothetical scenarios that abstract from political contexts—Ackerman sets his on a spaceship that is on route to an uninhabited planet, Dworkin sets his on a desert island.¹⁹

Walzer's more contextual method has provided a valuable corrective to philosophical abstraction, such that contextualism is now much more common in political theory than it was in the 1980s, inspiring scholars generally at odds with some aspects of Walzer's work.²⁰ Walzer's contextualism proceeds via interpretation of the meaning of goods. Philosophical interpretivism was a prominent feature of Anglophone political theory in 1983,²¹ but using interpretive method to construct a theory of distributive justice was less so. Moreover, Walzer's argument that interpretivism can be allied to an egalitarian account via social criticism of established practices that are at odds with deeper meanings (Walzer 1983: 318–21; 1987: 33–65) adds a way of reconciling equality with particularism that strikes us as fruitful for rethinking social democracy in an age of political polarization and a surge of populism on the right. For Walzer's appeal to social meanings, couched as it is in the language of shared understandings,²² has frequently been criticized on the grounds that it is implicitly conservative or less critical of quotidian norms than a theory of justice

should be.²³ Critics have taken Walzer to exaggerate the degree of social consensus, holding that any shared understandings that do exist likely result from domination and so lack moral force.²⁴

If it were the case that interpretation is inevitably insufficiently critical of established practices, then an egalitarian theory would have no recourse but to abandon Walzer's particularism and return to the universalism of much left-liberalism. Yet if goods really are created by groups and societies, then a universal theory lacks purchase on the objects of distribution. It is its attention to goods-in-their-context that gives Walzer's theory its richness and flavor. I have argued elsewhere that critics overstate the degree of consensus to which Walzer appeals (Reiner 2017; 2020: 69–75), for his argument is not that citizens of a society always have an identical moral worldview but that whatever understandings of goods do exist are culturally specific. Interpretation does not “commit us to a positivist reading of the actually existing morality” (Walzer 1987: 29), nor does it assume that meanings are “just *there*, agreed on once and for all” (Walzer 2007: 42). Rather, “they are always subject to dispute” (42). Walzerian interpretivism is a plea for political theory to use as its materials the messy, semi-articulated, seemingly incoherent arguments of daily life, not the tidy, formal rigorous thought experiments of analytic philosophers (Walzer 2007: 1–37). Walzerian egalitarianism is in part the claim that equality can emerge from engagement with the political traditions of particular societies, as social critics find fertile ground in pointing out the gap between social practices and underlying principles (Walzer 1987: 33–65). The argument is that distributive justice always has its roots in a political tradition, because the goods available for distribution are the products of that tradition's society, but that traditions are always contested and can always be read in democratic, egalitarian ways that undercut hierarchy.

The rich flavor of Walzer's situated arguments related to migration, cultural diversity, workplace rights, and so on, thus stem from his insistence that goods are social products with social meanings embedded in political traditions that are sites of social contestation. Consider his oft-stated position on healthcare (Walzer 1983: 86–91; 1994: 26–31).²⁵ Walzer argues that healthcare in the United States ought to be distributed on the basis of need; that is, provided free at the point of delivery to those already sick and to prevent future illness. The implication is that the private medical insurance system ought to be replaced by at least a “Medicare for All” scheme and probably a national health service that provides

universal coverage for all citizens. Walzer repeatedly made this argument during the 1980s, in a period when the Reagan Government won repeated heavy victories in Presidential elections on a platform dedicated to cutting public spending on welfare (Walzer 1986). How could Walzer plausibly claim that there was a shared understanding in the United States that healthcare was a need? The answer is that Walzer's claim that healthcare should be distributed on the basis of need is an implication of his account of its social meanings, not the account itself. For Walzer, what makes socialized distribution morally necessary is our shared commitments to health (the avoidance and minimization of pain and suffering) and longevity, commitments that are particular to the modern age (see especially Walzer 1994: 26–28). Walzer argues that past cultures did not value long life as we do, both because they were less likely to achieve it and because of more widespread belief in the afterlife, which encouraged stoicism about death that few contemporaries share. Which of us today would choose, with Achilles, to live a short but glorious life, rather than a longer, obscure one? It is Walzer's contention that few contemporaries would do so. Rebutting Walzer's position cannot proceed simply by arguing that most Americans think that healthcare should be treated as a commodity, bought and sold on the marketplace. Rather, it requires either showing that he is mistaken about our commitment to longevity or making a case for the compatibility of such a commitment with the commodification of medical care.²⁶

I detail Walzer's healthcare argument for two reasons. First, one of Walzer's central contributions in *Spheres* (and follow-up work) is to demonstrate the case for theories of justice emerging out of enquiry into social meaning and using said meanings to argue for distributive principles. Walzer's interest in social meanings is thus one of the reasons why *Spheres* covers myriad topics that were not then widely discussed in political theory but are important today. Political theory today looks far more Walzerian than it did in 1983, because there is far greater focus on applied work on topics of importance in political life, and perhaps less on intellectual and moral foundations. Walzer is a direct influence on the content of some important works in some of these growth areas.²⁷ In some cases, his influence is apparent in the choice of topic and is briefly acknowledged, but his claims are less important to the author's arguments (for discussion, Moore 2016).²⁸ Yet even where the overlap is coincidental, *Spheres* is important for bringing to attention significant political issues such as migration, free time, and hard work, and for demonstrating that one of

the tasks of a theory of distributive justice is to grapple and engage with them rather than proceeding in abstraction from them.

A corollary of Walzer's insistence in *Spheres* that distributive justice engages with political issues is his claim that it should pay attention to our specific attributes.²⁹ Walzer devotes a chapter of *Spheres* to recognition, arguing that complex equality in this area would break with a system of recognition based on rank but insisting that "individual men and women would still be differentially honored" (Walzer 1983: 258) beyond a minimal respect, because admiration loses its meaning if all are equally admired. In this argument, Walzer breaks with the rejection of moral desert in the theories of Rawls and Dworkin (Rawls 1971: 310–15),³⁰ insisting that abstracting from both goods and personal qualities cannot "possibly do justice to persons as they are, in search of goods as they conceive them. We don't encounter other people as moral and psychological blanks...[Justice] begins with persons-in-the-social world, with goods in their minds" (Walzer 1983: 261). A complexly egalitarian society must ensure equality of democratic citizenship (277), but alongside this, special honors for noteworthy achievements—including dishonors and criminal punishments—must continue if justice is to be meaningful for us. Recognition freely given, and not linked to inherited status, is integral to the development of democratic self-respect (279–80). Complex equality should allow for inequality of certain types of recognition.³¹ So long as honors and punishments do not determine people's overall life chances, they are compatible with complex equality. As Walzer later put it, "John Rawls deserved the honors he won by writing *A Theory of Justice*—even if his intelligence was an accidental effect of the natural lottery" (Walzer 2007: 304). The crucial point is that, just as theories of justice must engage with specific social goods, so they must consider people as they are, for who "we are necessarily has consequences in the social world" (304). An egalitarian theory can be truly egalitarian only if it speaks to its purported beneficiaries, and too great a use of philosophical abstraction jeopardizes its attempts to speak to ordinary citizens.

Second, Walzer's claims about healthcare illustrate the plausibility of his argument that enquiry into social meaning can uncover areas of surprising overlap and agreement between political opponents that is obscured by dispute over principles of distribution and other normative dissensus. This is one of the things that makes *Spheres* a lasting work, for it offers an approach to distributive justice grounded in the claim that members of a society share more in common than our political disputes suggest.

What we share is a tradition of arguing about how to live together (Walzer 1987: 32). Theories of justice can help to narrow disagreement by showing that it is often rooted in different understandings of a shared way of life and by focusing on justice “*right here*” (Walzer 1980: 49), rather than *sub specie aeternitatis* (on this, see especially Walzer 2007: 68–80; c.f. Rawls 1971: 587). This does not mean that Walzer’s theory of society is one of consensus. Indeed, in *Spheres* he offers an account of a society wracked by disagreement, arguing that “when understandings are controversial, justice requires that the society be faithful to the disagreements, providing institutional channels for their expression, adjudicative mechanisms, and alternative distributions” (Walzer 1983: 313). Thus, Walzer’s approach can be a fruitful way to think through political conflict in eras of polarization such as the 2020s, by drawing our attention to the fact that citizens share a common life,³² participate together in the creation of goods, and that their disagreements are often nested within a political tradition that is meaningful to them all.

That is, Walzer makes the case for a more overtly *political* theory of distributive justice that engages with debates in institutional politics. In this sense, his work anticipates “new realist” thought³³—one of the major growth areas in Anglophone philosophy in recent decades—in suggesting that political theory avoid abstract moralizing. Walzer argues that such criticism “doesn’t touch the conscience of the people to whom it is addressed” (Walzer 1988: 151). Unlike new realists, however, Walzer does not advance a sharp distinction between “political” and “moralist” approaches to philosophy (for examples of realists who do so, see especially Larmore 2013 and Williams 2005, the latter of whom bakes such a distinction into his title), but offers a moral argument rooted in political discourse. Walzer suggests that criticism that works within a discourse is more effective because it shows us what we aspire to be (Walzer 1988: 151), and that this is necessary to inspire popular mobilization by appealing to our “historically formed” and “culturally specific” values and ideals (126).

With that said, recent waves of migration and the resulting increase in cultural diversity around the world provide a stark test case of the theory that Walzer advances in *Spheres*. Disparate cultural and ethnic groups may *not* share the goods, meanings, or values to which Walzer appeals. If not, the same arguments that I adduced above in critique of a universal theory of justice would apply internally, within a nation-state, to the different groups. If social goods are the key bedrock of the theory—the things