

RE-IMAGINING PUBLIC SPACE

The Frankfurt School in the 21st Century

Foreword by STEPHEN ERIC BRONNER
Edited by DIANA BOROS & JAMES M. GLASS



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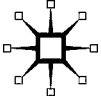
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FOREWORD

Critical theory was once the province of a small circle of intellectuals. Not anymore. It has invaded all the social sciences and the humanities. What had begun in 1929 as an extra-academic form of interdisciplinary investigation, committed to an assault upon “traditional” theory in its metaphysical and materialist forms, has been captured by existing disciplines and, for the most part, domesticated. Stars of the “Frankfurt School” such as Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas, and Herbert Marcuse are now part of the canon. In the process, however, their books have turned into classical texts subject (like all others) to the deadening demands of academic exegesis and purely esoteric debate. Critical Theory has become just another philosophical approach, and as a consequence it has undergone a crisis of purpose. Its connection to a transformative project has been sundered, its radical bite has been lost, and its commitment to liberation has virtually disappeared. New developments call for subjecting current understandings of Critical Theory to its own form of critique. In this regard, *Re-Imagining Public Space: The Frankfurt School in the 21st Century* has important contributions to make.

Diana Boros and James M. Glass, the editors, have put together a volume that attempts to reclaim the past in order to confront the present and project new possibilities for the future. Their anthology is comprised of essays written by authors who have gained special prominence in dealing with the critical tradition. I have known many of them for a long time and even collaborated with them; a few were my students who are now following their own paths; and the rest I know from their notable writings. It is a privilege for me to introduce this remarkably well-focused anthology that deals with a basic intellectual concern of mine. Years ago I called for confronting the establishmentarian malaise of Critical Theory by reaffirming its political and public character. This anthology takes an important step in that direction. Critical Theory is here, once again, treated as a social theory. The difference with early works like Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1964) could not be clearer. Narrow aesthetic, geographic, and philosophical concerns make way for viewing

space as a material construct interwoven with conceptual and political implications. This underpins the kind of unique interdisciplinary character of this work and underscores its intellectual richness. All of its authors are intent upon reconnecting Critical Theory with the lived reality of citizens and the ideological impulses and structural imbalances of power in a global society that they experience often without being aware of them.

Re-Imagining Public Space thereby extends beyond what the term “public philosophy” originally implied when Walter Lippman and John Dewey employed it in the 1920s and 1930s. It is today a different time, and Critical Theory needs to function under conditions of globalization where the Internet has (for better or worse) become a primary form of communication. The editors have recognized this in the essays they have chosen. Underlying themes target the manipulated character of everyday life as well as the prospects of resistance and the limits of engagement in this new age. Old concerns with institutionally enforced apathy and manipulation of public opinion, the substitution of information for knowledge, and the erosion of democratic will formation blend with new views on the public sphere, public space, and the contradictions of public life. This overriding set of concerns, again, makes the volume unique and justifies the editors’ intention of making the Frankfurt School relevant for the twenty-first century.

The “public sphere” (and the space associated with it) has become more complicated than when Jürgen Habermas first introduced the concept in 1962. Connected with the age of the bourgeois revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the public sphere fostered democratic will formation as well as debate through the interplay of diverse views, resulting in an ongoing self-criticism. Capitalism was new, the state was weak, and the culture industry did not exist. The space in which public life took shape had a different character. Yet, from its inception, the public sphere differed from a community or a neighborhood. It has always been composed of strangers rather than friends (or enemies), and its concern has always been with illuminating general concerns from the interplay of private interests. The public sphere is critical insofar as it raises new possibilities for change and previously ignored experiences of injustice and oppression. So, for example, the women’s liberation movement raised previously neglected issues of everyday life such as spousal abuse, date rape, and incest through its public sphere of bookstores, conferences, consciousness-raising activities, health clinics, and lobbying concerns. Arguably, this entire undertaking rests on transforming “private problems into public issues” (C. Wright Mills). The editors do not back away from this injunction.

Undoubtedly, the radical public sphere that arose during the age of democratic revolutions has been transformed by the ensuing confluence of a burgeoning welfare state, an extension of the commodity form, and what Hendrik de Man once termed a “massification” of culture. As this volume makes clear, however, the frequent claims concerning the disappearance of resistance to these trends in the “totally administered society” are exaggerated. Not everything is integrated and neutralized. Public opinion can take progressive or reactionary forms, and much of the current “critical” discussion remains abstract and apolitical. All the essays in this volume recognize that there are conflicting political and cultural currents in modern society and that they require normative rather than purely analytic investigation. Fascism also had its public sphere, and it is more necessary now than ever to treat public life as what Douglas Kellner once termed “contested terrain.” Citizens still have a role to play. In fact, personally, I think that the public sphere only becomes of “critical” importance when connected with social movements, whether the complex “workers’ world” generated by the nineteenth-century labor movement, contemporary right-wing movements like the Tea Party, or the Arab Spring of 2011.

Concern with public space has Aristotelian roots. The passing of the agora and the polis have generated new discussions about the prospects of public dialogue by major twentieth-century thinkers like Hannah Arendt and Sheldon Wolin. This is taken into account by the editors. They recognize that building a new public sphere is only possible by confronting the obstacles put in its way by advanced industrial society. *Re-Imagining Public Space* highlights the very concrete changes that public space has undergone through, say, the rising rents that are steadily eroding the “pub” life of London, the gentrification that has occurred in Barcelona, or the waves of immigration that have transformed Paris and the very meaning of Europe. Investigating the various forms of media spectacle and the latent frustrations expressed in the “carnival” of modern society is a central concern of this anthology. Market forces and the new global society have had a psychological and existential impact on the individual, whether in terms of induced melancholia over the erosion of the past, a growing cosmopolitanism, or both at the same time.

Public space is not simply a metaphysical concept. Occupy Wall Street certainly made that clear, and urban development has had a profound impact on society. Differing experiences of different spatial structures have directly political impacts. Provincial neuroses and pathologies bolstered by traditional beliefs and habits are mostly a product of nonurban areas and parochial neighborhoods that provide quite a contrast to visions of the city that were somewhat idealized by Walter Benjamin.

Public space can generate anxiety and resentment as easily as curiosity and diversity. That is why the inquiry into digital media is so important. A public sphere seems to be emerging in space, but it is also manifesting itself purely in time. Linking the two in relation to a transformed public sphere that maximizes not only participation but a sustained interest in new forms of liberation is endemic to the project of any critical public philosophy.

The circle is closed. The public sphere was originally intertwined with organized political action and individual commitment. Which only begs the question: where are the latent sources of new political and individual commitment today? With its further development of Critical Theory and critical themes, *Re-Imagining Public Space* provides us with a place to begin thinking about illuminating what are still latent public interests, hidden prospects for innovative social movements, and new political commitments that meet the requirements of the age. That is the next step—and it will surely be made easier by books like this.

STEPHEN ERIC BRONNER

INTRODUCTION

Diana Boros and James M. Glass

Critical Theory and the Need to Re-Imagine Public Space

When Max Horkheimer took over the directorship of the Institute for Social Research in 1930, his explicit aim was to foster a new style of philosophical practice—one that did not function within traditional academic disciplinary boundaries, and one that aspired to provide tools by which to approach everyday existence with a critical perspective that valued insight, critique, and social engagement. The interdisciplinary thinkers who came together at the Institute in Frankfurt, Germany, can be understood as working within the tradition of humanist or Western Marxism, in that they were inspired by the Hegelian foundations of early Marxian thought and some by the psychoanalytic theory of Freud. They believed deeply in the value of philosophical inquiry that coexisted with and relied on sociological and psychological examinations of existing material conditions, that used the tools of public life, and that benefited the public in their everyday life. They desired to produce research that could enlighten all who endeavored to seek their own version of liberation and heightened self-awareness within the increasingly regulated and commercialized social and cultural spheres of the advancing twentieth century. They called this experimental approach to transformative philosophy a “Critical Theory” of society.

Critical Theory and the theorists of the Frankfurt School relied on the dialectic as a tool by which to examine the ideological blankets of capitalism and fascism, and in the postwar world, the ever-growing commodification and uniformization of public life. From the research developed at the Institute of Social Research before and after World War II (for example Adorno and Horkheimer’s exploration of the mass psychodynamics of fascism) to the later works of the 1960s and 1970s, these thinkers observed the advance of a free market dogma as it pushed through every potential

obstacle and established its dominance in language, cultural tropes, societal ideals, and even emotional and intellectual self-assessment by the individual. Today, their critique continues to be manifest in everything from rampant consumerism to the accompanying mass false consciousness that enables both self-destructive excessive spending and continued belief in and adherence to a system that relies on the existence of material excess and the distortion of political reality. It is against this collision of public space and advanced capitalism, in addition to the increasingly panoptic society, that Critical Theory provides uniquely modern criticisms of the forms by which society deadens, hollows out, and flattens individual desire, productivity, and political truth.

This group of prolific thinkers was concerned with the effects of advanced capitalism and its accompanying instrumental rationality on experiences of justice, citizenship, art, culture, individuality, and the nature of protest and resistance, among others. In an infamous chapter within the foundational text of Critical Theory—*Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944)—Theodor Adorno wrote famously of the power of the “culture industry” and the suffocating blanket it cast over creative and emotional practices. He argued that culture itself—as materialized in its many products—had become a function of the capitalist economy and its interpersonal dynamics. He was distressed that artistic projects were increasingly subject to the economic rules of popular entertainment and their commercial demands. Experiences of culture had formed around the redundant formulations and expected outcomes of successfully sold items. Art itself was losing its natural limitlessness and rebelliousness as it was consumed by a public seduced by the emotional ease of nicely packaged shadows of what was once a liberated artistic effort.

Much of the problem at the heart of the culture industry is that it was, and still is, able to prey on the natural human tendency to push away difficult and intense emotions. True art can bring out our most inner passions and sensations, our most deep-seated memories, and our most frightening vulnerabilities—that is art’s great beauty but also its burden. Burden because deep feeling, as much as it is the source of life, can also be unsettling and time consuming. The consumption of goods that make us feel easily happy and light—and *included in the approval of the group*—prevents us from needing to connect with our true human needs; it dulls our senses and lulls us into complacency and escape from an increasingly frenetic and disconnected commercial nexus. As Marcuse argued in *One-Dimensional Man*, advanced capitalism was highly adept at the creation of false needs that were merely a desire for commodities masquerading as true necessities, thereby drowning us in things, stuff, and the wish for more stuff.

In seeking an antidote, in *Essay on Liberation* (1969), Herbert Marcuse wrote, among other things, of the power of subversive and sensual public language to intervene and subvert the status quo of “Established Reality.” By the time he published *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972) just a few years later, he lamented the increasing inability of such linguistic interventions to satisfyingly “interrupt and disrupt.” He saw even then that the thick lava of advanced capitalism and its accompanying mainstream culture is rapidly able to smooth out the wrinkles of subversion into conformity, and that this meant resistance needed to be frequently reformulated. But even so, he had not fully anticipated how much the masses would want conformity, would resist critique, and as modern forms of social media suggest would seek out incessant approval, “friends,” and general pleasantness, substituting the unpleasant impact of critique with the wry, ironic distance of wit and pleasure.

A decade and a half after the publication of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Jürgen Habermas described his theory of the public sphere—in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962)—and articulated a vision of a troubled and declining public deliberative arena and its impact on individual agency. His primary concern was that the public sphere of the mid-twentieth century no longer captured the free voices of engaged citizens and their critical focus, but rather encouraged the diluted shout of a mass groupthink. Though his critics debate the accuracy of his views on the debilitated state of the public sphere, it is nonetheless a significant concern that when the public itself becomes a megaphone for the conglomeration of bureaucracy, mass media, and corporate interests, the average citizen has an uphill battle, particularly in a psychological sense, in attempting to express views oppositional to the mainstream. While Habermas continued to develop this argument in new directions in later years, this approach to the difficulties of the public sphere continues to be both provocative and relevant.

Public space, both literal and figurative, is foundationally important to democracy, to political life in general, and to individual citizenship, self-awareness, and emotional health. Recently, the diverse manifestations of the Arab Spring protests and their comprehensive seizing of public spaces, and the Occupy Wall Street movement that began in the dense confines of Manhattan, remind us that both physical and abstract public space—what we often term the “public sphere”—is potentially vastly underused, and not nearly inclusive enough in providing space for dissidence and dissidents.

There are many approaches to increasing both the use and inclusivity of a space. While mass political actions in physical public spaces and contentious debates in the democratic public tend to grab headlines, public

experiences of art, the way citizens experience expressions of creativity in public space, can also have a powerful effect on political perceptions. The diverse and ever-expanding movement in public art that encompasses the creation of objects, spaces, dialogues, actions, and performances consciously aims to increase individual awareness and inspiration in communal arenas that provide a dialectical alternative to the deadening effects of normalization.

This collection fundamentally revolves around an ardent belief that we, as a society and as individuals, are in need of a reconsideration of the experience of public space in the face of the current demands of public, democratic life. Further, the essays suggest that the influence of the Frankfurt School theorists is in need of constant reevaluation and updating in the light of modern political contradictions. As we move ahead in this new century, we need fresh approaches to the use and conditions of public space so that communal spaces can reflect ever-increasing perspectives while encouraging civic engagement as well as individual liberation and empowerment. Now the extent of surveillance techniques and their presence everywhere—the paranoia of the panoptical—certainly dims enthusiasm for what it means to be public, or to hold oneself out as a public being. Perhaps dialectical public art, transgression, and protest can push back against these powerful political currents.

This project aims to both examine our experiences of public life and communal spaces using the tools of Critical Theory and to reanimate the many contributions of the Frankfurt School theorists in light of twenty-first-century life. This volume focuses on the primary role that public space—both literal and figurative—plays in political life, political action, individual agency, and perception. In this, the volume reevaluates the work of the Frankfurt School—in particular the works of Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Jürgen Habermas—in terms of contemporary needs and conditions, and offers striking new insights into the ideas and approaches of these theorists.

This collection of essays makes a unique contribution to the field of political philosophy, and to political science more generally, and should be valuable to all theorists concerned with the nature and experience of public life, and with what the public can produce in the way of dialectical opposition, both immediately and directly, as well as symbolically. Further, this volume creates an environment where the reader can examine the various angles of contemporary political life and may revisit the concept of engagement and dialectic or become reacquainted with the revelatory ideas of this passionate group of thinkers and with the diverse approaches contained within the Critical Theory tradition.

The ideas presented in this volume are important to everyday life, and also to the many multidisciplinary explorations of Critical Theory and its applications to understanding and improving contemporary society and its experiences of everyday life. These essays energetically engage several major fields of inquiry within the realm of political theory, but they speak also to researchers in philosophy and cultural theory, American studies, critical economics, and globalization studies, as well as to architects, urban planners, and practitioners of social and public artworks. The diverse approaches to the issue of public space by the contributors in discussion here create the volume's own public sphere, valuable in and of itself as a site for contemplation, true democratic deliberation, and infinite mutability.

Contemporary Public Space and the Resulting Public Sphere

It seems a dangerous tendency to equate or even associate freedom with consumption, as is often the case in American everyday life. Many Americans believe—and feel—that the almost infinite choices they are thrillingly faced with at the supermarket or the mall express a true freedom, the sort of freedom that both democracy and capitalism work to protect. This can be seen too easily in how Super Bowl ads fetishize commodities in a way that goes far beyond Marx's vision of the magical properties of things. To the critical theorists, this sort of individual freedom is ultimately superficial and self-destructive and throws a veil over the significant unfreedom brought on by the inequality and corruption that the excessive propensities of capitalism can highlight—the increasingly wide gap between the rich and the poor, the 2 percent and the remaining 98 percent. The Frankfurt School thinkers were interested in liberation as an active leap of consciousness that could awaken self-knowledge and self-engagement through primary symbols that had nothing to do with the soporific effect of things or the mindless generation of energy and power in pursuit of global capitalism. A primary concern was the ability to have a voice in public space—to be able to know oneself and to use that self-recognition, which could be painful and alienating, to penetrate the density of public opinion with a unique critique of the power of opinion to dull and emasculate the self's agency and its ability to be creative without being slavish. If democracy is indeed less a governmental structure and more “things that people do,” then the people need to feel a desire to act, and a space open, available, and liberated in which to perform their acts. These actions, too, need to live within political contexts committed to freedom, equality, justice, and a form of democracy more akin to

Marx's humanist vision in his early writings than to the formulation that democracy's best interests are served by enriching its elites.

In late 2011, when Occupy Wall Street protestors set up camp in a small downtown New York City public space known as Zuccotti Park and became a visual aberration to the clean lines of the surrounding neighborhood, New Yorkers, and the country at large, were reminded of the spontaneous and subversive possibilities that could exist in our outdoor commons. Many people were even more surprised to learn that seemingly public spaces can actually be privately owned. Zuccotti Park, for example, turned out to be owned by the firm that occupied the adjoining building. This is far from an uncommon practice. In fact, the type of legislation that encourages this practice—zoning provisions that allow developers to trade the creation of a public plaza on their land for the ability to build a larger building—is responsible for creating most of our contemporary urban public spaces. In other words, new public spaces today are, more often than not, not created thoughtfully for the true benefit of a diverse public, but rather as an afterthought in order to accomplish corporate goals. While this isn't entirely negative—in that public spaces are still being actively built—it is still a frightening development, most especially because it is largely invisible and not dependent upon democratic decisions regarding how, when, and where to construct public spaces. As afterthoughts to capitalist interests, public spaces become something of an economic throwaway; but the Occupy movements utilized these throwaways in ways certainly not intended by their creators. It is so essential to reclaim these public spaces and, accordingly, to create more dialectically voiced images and actions in the greater public sphere, through insertions of vibrant joyous life, true art, and visions that negate the sterile nature of corporate narratives that corrupt our communal lives.

In a *New York Times* article titled "Treasuring Urban Oases" (December 4, 2011), Alexander Garvin—architect and urban planner for five New York City administrations—argued that "the streets, squares, parks, infrastructure and public buildings make up the fundamental element in any community—the framework around which everything else grows." If we take the above as a fundamental truth, it is a significant development in our public sphere that the spaces in which we contemplate life daily—the spaces which we should, according to the values of democratic theory, "own and control" (Garvin, *New York Times*)—have become only superficially or partially ours. Ultimately, more than needing to own them, we need to feel we can use them—in the way that Sproul Plaza and People's Park at Berkeley were used during the free speech movement and the Vietnam War demonstrations. Parks, plazas, centers, even parking lots can be the environment of lively public spaces devoted to powerful

demonstrations of public energy and equality. Democracy and new ideas and images of liberation require supportive foundations and encouraging environments, and while it may seem that corporate ownership of public life does not actually affect our use of those spaces, it certainly can: things can be closed down, plazas cleared, parks closed, and the inhabitants evicted. So political theorists and philosophers may want to pay some attention to what public space and its ownership means—what it implies within larger dialogues in the community about the direction of political life, the future of equality, the state of the environment and how individuals, families, groups, and communities lead their lives. Maybe urban planners and public artists can have some influence on that dialogue. “Open to the public” does not amount to the same message—either physically or metaphorically—as “Owned by the public.” There is a distinct physicality and visuality to market encroachment on public life—more than ever, and certainly far beyond the world the Frankfurt School thinkers were critiquing a half century ago.

In *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (2012), Michael Sandel argues that over the last three decades in particular, the dominance of the market and the prevalence of market values have reached an apex. His concern is largely with the ability to buy and sell an increasing multitude of experiences, and with the ability of corporate interests to enter (and rename) everything from sports stadiums to public schools, and of course public parks. His primary concern is twofold. On the one hand, he worries how this encroachment of market values on communal life affects the inclusivity inherent to a just state—in that those with less means can essentially buy less of public life. On the other hand—and this is what is most dangerous—he argues that market values can distort essential emotions and ethical behaviors: “Economists often assume that markets are inert, that they do not affect the goods being exchanged. But this is untrue. Markets leave their mark. Sometimes, market values crowd out nonmarket values worth caring about” (9). It is in part this dilution and distortion that continues to concern critical theorists.

Critical Theory is certainly as useful and necessary today as it was during its conception and initial rise. Today, we are living in a truly globalized economy and culture; information travels faster than the Frankfurt School theorists could have once imagined. The traditional middle class has all but disappeared, while all citizens have become prey to increasing economic inequalities that prevent a fair chance at the sort of success that enables the freedom to consider valuable alternatives to the status quo. We need new theories and perspectives to meet these challenges, as well as to integrate the new forms of social media into useful and concrete expressions of public life that bring us together, out of our privacy, away

from our screens, away from our essential hermeticism in the seeking of technological community, to real community, real live human beings, celebrating democracy and individuality, collectivity in spaces, in public, without barriers.

The Exploration of Public Space in This Collection

These essays argue, from various vantage points, that already existing forces present in everyday life in the twenty-first century can be reapproached and reconfigured to serve as arenas for liberation, inclusion, and rebellion. They present hopeful visions of how art and carnivalistic transgressions, protest, the various dimensions of media, and an urban landscape, among other avenues, can serve to rework existing reality into a more liberating dynamic for a more free society.

In the first chapter, “Habermas, the Public Sphere and Democracy,” Douglas Kellner addresses the Habermasian notion of the public sphere. Jürgen Habermas’s concept of the public sphere was conceived early on in his theory as a space of liberty, where “individuals gathered to discuss their common public affairs and to organize against arbitrary and oppressive forms of social and public power.” The interests of property and capital, freedom of assembly, free press, and the free participation in political debate and decision making were hallmarks of the practice of democracy within the public space. In the modern era, however, the concept was elaborated by print and broadcast media, and echoing themes in Adorno and Horkheimer, Habermas sees this “culture industry” exercising a disproportionate influence on the public sphere. Media therefore constrains democratic discourse to that which is supported by global capitalism and the media corporations themselves. We now have citizens as spectators rather than active participants in democratic discourse. Yet Habermas’s earlier concept of the “bourgeois public space” argued strongly for a return to rational discourse, and for discussions of freedom as a matter of public citizenship. But critics, Kellner argues, took issue with Habermas’s “idealization” of this earlier concept, arguing that power and interest often transform “rational discourse” into the very biased perspectives of capital and repressive social structures. “Deliberative democracy” originated in a period where the primary drivers of public space disappeared in Western corporate power and the rampage of imperialist adventures in Asia and Africa.

Yet Kellner, in modifying Habermas (and C. Wright Mills) in his notion of the public sphere, addresses the positive role the “new media, social networking and cyberspace” provide for rethinking “new sites for democratic politics.” No longer, he argues, is it the media empires in

conjunction with global capital that have sole power over public space, but social media has added significant political clout to democratic voices. Kellner argues that we need to move away from the model of “mass society” and the power Habermas accords to the culture industry. Kellner, unlike the essay included in this volume by Thompson and Rensmann, suggests that we embrace social media as a form of power to potentially revitalize the contemporary sense of the public space and what it means for democratic transformation.

Kellner examines at some length Habermas’s transformation from embracing the bourgeois theory of liberty to his “discourse-theory of communicative action and his linguistic turn.” It may not be the case that the interests of democracy and a participatory public sphere can be sustained by discourse alone. Kellner contrasts this view with an argument for “strong democracy,” a more active, praxis-oriented theory of social change and transformation. Habermas, he maintains, “romanticizes” the “lifeworld,” but Kellner suggests that new social media and technology facilitate democratization and the redrawing of public sphere boundaries. Technology, then, in Kellner’s view, is not a tool of instrumental rationality or the culture industry, but a force enhancing the very limits of communication and contributing to a more democratic construction of public space. These new technologies provide a political promise that was lacking in the older concept of print and broadcast media.

Social media transmit more than “messages”—it potentially engages the public in critical debates about democracy and the foundations of distributive justice. In Kellner’s view, Habermas also neglects the question of how a progressive view of media politics “could evolve.” For Kellner the connection between democracy and what he calls the “new media” opens the possibility for not only rethinking the meaning of participation but creating entirely new avenues of democratic participation. Kellner argues that media itself can become active participation in social and political transformation. Therefore new media technologies have the potential to be more “democratic and empowering” than older forms. Indeed for Kellner, to be a public intellectual, to promote democracy today, means learning new technologies, mastering them in order to reach a broader public and expand the horizons of democratic action.

In “Reflections on the Meaning and Experience of Public Space: A Critical Psychoanalytic Perspective,” Michael Diamond looks at the concept of the public in the language of psychoanalytic theory, particularly the work of D. W. Winnicott and Thomas Ogden, and reviews important questions about the relationship between the private self and public space. What sorts of psychodynamics can be drawn, he asks, that more fully articulate the power that the internal self has on the external actions

and institutions composing the public space? He further demonstrates the implications of the “juxtaposition of tension between public space and private space” that leads to a “reframing of the concept of public space” in a language that captures this tension between internal psychodynamics of self and other (and its roots in childhood) and its impact on how we experience and act in the public space.

For Diamond, “the notion of public space is defined in dialectical tension with our theory of private space.” Much of this psychological balance for an effective democratic politics comes from self-organization and “conscious awareness of otherwise unconscious, regressive forces.” What neutralizes the persecutory and hostile dimension of public space (while it is never completely eliminated) involves the balancing potential of transitional spaces, that is, the exercise of imagination in both infant and child in such a way that the imaginative foundations of the self do not involve split-off angry elements that can come back to haunt the conscious adult self with fantasies of revenge and violence.

What society needs to pay attention to are patterns of parenting that create effective holding environments for developing selves capable of detoxifying powerful negative affect filled with fantasies of violence, negation, and hostility. It is a form of teaching: how does society provide psychological space where negativity can be drained out in dialectic between creative imaginative relational processes (reciprocity, compromise, and restraint) and social structures that on occasion move toward violent confrontation? The often difficult relationships between self and other find themselves worked out on the public stage. And to maintain a democratic public space requires that these often negative positions be detoxified in a way that supports the values of reciprocity, give and take, or, in other words, the democratic process.

David Ingram and Asaf Bar-Tura’s “The Public Sphere as Site of Emancipation and Enlightenment: A Discourse Theoretic Critique of Digital Communication” examines new media from a different angle and looks at how Habermas’s discourse theory of democracy constitutes a response to the crisis of liberal democracy. They ask “whether and how the public sphere can remain a site of enlightenment and emancipation in an age of mass media and communications.” Can mass or social media serve as well as face-to-face focus group discussion “in generating rational public opinion formulation conducive to reaching [democratic] consensus?” From their point of view, Internet technologies may not provide an effective medium for enhancing democracy or the democratic process itself. They argue that there are certain structural disadvantages “to the mass media that distort how groups perceive the public space.”

Face-to-face discussion, however, involves a certain element of empathy absent in how print and broadcast media as well as social media present social and political issues. Further, the authors suggest that digital media and social media do not in fact allow “for more marginalized voices to enter public discourse” and thus do not greatly contribute to democratizing the public sphere. While corporate media power has seemed to become less influential and bottom-up social media more powerful, it is not at all clear that such developments contribute to the democratic process. And the Internet itself, Ingram and Bar-Tura argue, “creates and sustains socioeconomic barriers to accessing the digital public sphere.” Rather than social inequalities getting better as a result of the dominance of Internet use, they may in fact be getting worse.

In “Walter Benjamin and the Modern Parisian Cityscape,” Mary Caputi examines Walter Benjamin’s concept of the cityscape. She argues that Benjamin’s work reveals a great deal about the “urban cityscape of the twenty-first century,” the forces of globalization, and the impact of the “global infusion [of] markedly foreign populations.” The modern public space, and she uses Paris as her example, is “increasingly less white, less Western, and less conversant in the language of its hosting nation.” She turns to Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*, which “unveils a ruinous chain of events beset by the tragic tendency to repeat over and over again the same catastrophic story of violence, brutality, alienation, and class antagonisms.” The history of the city demonstrates these tragic consequences in the public spaces of the cityscape. We long, Caputi argues, for a radically different world, but history thwarts that longing through a violence engendered by capitalist institutions and practices which promote class antagonisms.

In Benjamin’s view, the modern Parisian cityscape could be read as a series of representations or experiences unlocking memory, a “longing to discover the new . . . to recoup something stored in our collective memory: a utopia marked by classlessness.” In its representations of memory, through monuments, streets, and histories, the city is both a place of promise and emblematic of the history of suffering itself. The city then becomes the collective story of the people, the place of memory and action, of despair and potentiality. For Caputi, “modernity” replays the wreckage of history, and one sees in the modern city “human misery in a new guise.” The modern city or cityscape projects conflict, dislocation, class divisions, homelessness, and hunger, demonstrating capitalism’s failures, not its dazzling successes. Paris, she argues, embodies the contradictions of the current neoliberal global order of colonialism and Eurocentrism. Paris constantly projects into its public space reminders of past injustices; for example, those who in the past were excluded

now populate the streets and “arcades” of the cityscape itself. Slavery, economic exploitation, cultural ruin—these are the historical memories emblematic of a modern city like Paris.

The “ideals of the city”—liberty, fraternity, and equality, the great French stored memory—never reached a developing world decimated by the blistering onslaught of colonial inhumanity. The transformed Parisian cityscape, with its kebab shops, African markets, and exotic goods offers a range of cultural experiences that seem to embody a “desire for a common humanity,” although many in France resist these developments, as witnessed by the ultraright’s rejection of the new in favor of the old, the wish to preserve the French “nation” for those of French heritage. For Caputi, the old in this case rejects a common humanity and embraces a radical form of exclusion, refusing and stigmatizing the new. Modernity, Caputi concludes, has not succeeded in fulfilling the fantasy of a common humanity; rather what emerges are fractured and hostile confrontations and considerable social and cultural rejection of a developing world living and working in the midst of the Parisian cityscape.

Public spaces, according to Malcolm Miles in “Critical Spaces: Public Spaces, the Culture Industry, Critical Theory, and Urbanism,” may or may not promote democracy; however, they often promote commoditized culture, in the form of “art,” in which case they work for the interests of “capital.” It is a mistake, Miles argues, to suggest that public space and democracy always “align”; for example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, public space often became a celebration for particular representations of power. One shouldn’t ignore the fact that today many public spaces are “semiprivatized” and therefore not committed to maintaining democracy but to publicizing and pushing specific commercial interests. Designed public spaces often try to mask democracy itself and promote instead “cultural tourism” (for example, Barcelona) or other forms of commerce consistent with the interests of consumption and capital. It is not the case that new public spaces may be conceived as a commitment to urban democracy but instead suggest “ideological impositions” or forms of “urban marketing.” The danger for Miles lies in romanticizing concepts of public space: “The value attributed to today’s public spaces is a romantic lapse: there is little if any evidence that the remaking of a society occurs in such locations, or ever has except in rare moments of insurrection.”

Mass communication today and social media alter the entire concept of what the “public space” is; for example, “the public sphere becomes the mall and its virtual equivalent.” Yet this need not be the case. Miles points to the Occupy movement as an example of how creativity and being in public can promote democratic ideals. An age of hyperconsumerism

confuses what we mean by the public space, and so we radically need to rethink the notion of a “public realm.” He argues that today free open space is threatened by all means of surveillance and is corrupted by commercialism; public deliberation often finds itself degraded by special interests, global corporations, and the interests of capital.

How then do we think of the public realm in modern times? Miles looks to “transitional spaces,” for example coffee shops and other informal public “mutable” sites, where differences are aired openly. He contrasts such democratic practices, with their fluidity, “to the fixed design of urban spaces that reproduce a fixed ideology.” Artistic public spaces today do not necessarily have anything to do with democracy, and contemporary urban designers in constructing public spaces do not have democratic political interests at heart; rather commerce and “designer consumption” often drive their designs. In the end, Miles argues that “neither public space nor public art guarantee democracy, and both may, all too often, be cosmetic solutions to wider problems.” Real democracy, the action of protest and transformation, “emerges spontaneously, just as Occupy appeared suddenly.” It cannot be constructed or designed by urban planners. It happens, and in this spontaneous action we may find the promise for a better, more democratic future.

In “Idealizing Public Space: Arendt, Wolin, and the Frankfurt School,” C. Fred Alford examines the foundations of public space through differences among the theories of Hannah Arendt, Sheldon Wolin, and Herbert Marcuse. For Alford, “a democratized public sphere . . . was never an ideal of the Frankfurt School or Critical Theory.” Marcuse of course is not as “political” as are Wolin and Arendt; for Arendt, public space “is that space where a few men can achieve greatness through noble words and greed deeds.” For Wolin, however, public space is the world of the political where “the material necessities of life, including the opportunity to develop the skills to produce them, will be distributed fairly,” a consequence produced through deliberation which prizes diversity and equality. It is quite a different vision from that of Arendt, and singularly at odds, in its focus on politics and action, with the Marcusean view of a lifeworld so full of material wealth that the administration of things happens quite naturally and individuals fulfill their erotic potentialities (the Marxian sensuality) and live without fear of the death instinct defining how they approach choice, reason, and the lifeworld.

Marcuse elaborates a vision of future society that embodies much of the humanism and idealism of Marx’s 1844 economic and philosophical manuscripts. Marcuse’s nonalienated world, in Alford’s reading, “assumes an advanced industrial or rather postindustrial society, coupled with the reformulation of wants,” a theory opening up possibilities for self-