Citizenship Studies

Civil sphere, state, and citizenship: replying to Turner and the fear of enclavement

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Civil sphere, state, and citizenship: replying to Turner and the fear of enclavement[1]

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Bryan Turner and I agree that universalism and inclusion are goals that should orient societies and democratic social theory alike, not only for moral reasons of justice but for reasons of empirical stability as well. What worries Turner is that neither the theory nor the practice of civil society can provide the 'necessary brake upon the exclusionary solidaristic forces of the family, the tribe, the sect and the secret society'.

One source of Turner's concern is that the civil sphere cannot enforce justice and fairness, for this task must ultimately depend, he believes, not on subjective solidarity and normative regulation, but on the strength of the state. The other source for his concern is different but related. Even if we allow for the importance of such non-state processes, he worries, the manner in which I conceive them in *The Civil Sphere* is a bit naïve, pre-9/11, and American-centric. My multicultural line actually betrays universalism and inclusion, opening the door to particularity and civil strife. Once again: exit civil society, enter the (secular) state.

The ambiguities of citizenship

Turner suggests that *Civil Sphere* 'fails ultimately to provide a solution' to the challenges of exclusion and particularism because it 'neglects ... the institutions of secular citizenship connecting the private citizen to the state through such mechanisms as taxation and public service'.

Is 'citizenship' without civil society the right way to go? With civil society, should 'citizenship' really be so closely connected to the state? Can we place our hopes for justice on an institution that, throughout the history of classical and modern societies, has so often been defined in such a circumscribed manner that it has suggested only membership in the state? Turner himself acknowledges that 'a citizen is simply a member of a state', suggesting, by contrast, that even 'the traditional discussion of civil society has also included the ideas of civility and civic duty'. Why? Because 'without trust and friendship the competition between rational actors in the state may well destroy political life through endless interpersonal conflicts'.

One of the major ambitions of *Civil Sphere* is, in fact, to explain why this must be so. I talk at some length about the normative and empirical weakness of state-oriented theorizing. States are, of course, essential, but they are, in their modern forms, simply Hobbesian organizations that have succeeded in monopolizing the means of violence and, thereby, in creating societal pacification. As such, states have nothing to with justice in the

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democratic sense, but everything to do with order, with creating public, abstract, and universalizing standards that allow efficient, top-down, bureaucratic control. As Turner has suggested, states provide arenas for rational, power-oriented actors. Without a vast complex of moral-related communicative and regulative institutions stationed on the boundaries of this arena, struggles for state power remain amoral and instrumental. In classical terms, such struggles represent the tradition of Thracymachus, the cynic whom Plato conceived as the foil for Socrates. The tradition of Thracymachus was carried forward by Machiavelli and Weber, for whom the arc of modern politics was energized by the demands for command and control. *Herrschaft* (domination), not justice and solidarity, was the name of the game.

In modern times, anti-democratic states are careful to speak of those they dominate as citizens rather than as subjects. One need simply scroll down the list of twentieth century state societies to see just how hollow the status of citizenship often has been. I do not see how taxation and public service mitigate this hollowness in any way. Historically, taxation is first imposed through coercion, as a means for maintaining the patrimonial state. As long as there is not an independent civil sphere to control it, taxation has continued to function in much the same way. It is a top-down imposition; it can be justified normatively only by democratic participation in, and civil control over, the taxing agency itself. Nor does public service show itself any better from the democratic point of view. Authoritarian and totalitarian states have always demanded that their citizens serve, and trumpeted their sacrifices for the patria, the homeland, the glories of the people's state.

The inadequacies of the public/private binary

The problem here is that Turner, like so many other democratic theorists, reifies the idea of public. Taken in itself, public simply means visible or funded by the state. Neither of these conditions is particularly democratic or moral. 'How will public institutions be funded without the universal obligations of taxation?' Turner asks. Either this question is tautological or it implies – as Turner obviously means it to – the equation of publicness with justice and democratic control. 'In Britain', Turner continues, 'the public as a discursive democratic space depends heavily on the BBC, public libraries, museums, and the universities'. In Britain as presently constituted, certainly, this is true. But the contemporary British situation is not sufficient to sustain the general argument that discursive democratic space depends on such state-oriented public controls. All modern societies have tax-funded media, libraries, museums, and universities, but such public institutions are not all democratic. They can be manifestly nationalist, fascist, religious, ethnic, or communist.

Turner decries the fact that, in Britain, 'these institutions are under constant threat of privatization', warning that if this threat succeeds they will be 'subordinated to an alien system of appraisal in terms of commercial values'. This is good politics – most of us protest creeping commercialization, and wish to defend the state-supported institutions we like. But I wonder if it is equally good social theory. It seems to me that the binary of state-versus-commercial control is too simple and ultimately unrevealing. In the US, most of the elite universities are private, but they are not profit-making, and they are typically subject to less anti-democratic intrusion and manipulation than the great public universities. In the UK, the BBC is public, but is it really best understood as a state institution? Does its distinctive blend of journalistic integrity and democratic responsibility not depend on the manner in which state ownership is regulated by the web of political, legal, and moral mechanisms representing the civil domain?

In my view, the democratic potentiality of media depends on independence and self-regulation, not on whether there is, or is not, some connection to commerce or the state. In the first instance, such independence is underwritten by the professional ethics of journalism, which can be supported and maintained – and make a profit for – private capitalist interests. They can also, of course, be undermined by same. The four national television companies in the United States are privately held, if state-regulated, and three of them are typically regarded, despite their many failings, as bastions of liberal, anti-conservative sentiment and political force. The acid test case for this binary, however, is newspapers. *Le Monde* and *The Guardian* are privately held, and they are immensely influential forces on the left. In the United States, the most liberal and progressive, and most influential newspapers, have typically been family firms, whether *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or *Los Angeles Times*. The last of these left the control of the Chandler family only recently, after more than a century of family control. The first two remain thoroughly entrenched in familial profit-making, by the Sulzbergers and Grahams, respectively.

The Watergate crisis toppled the deeply divisive and conservative regime of President Nixon, and its ability to do so depended on the ability of the media to withstand vast party, ideological, and governmental pressure. This ability rested, in turn, on the Graham family lending its capitalist weight to demands for journalistic ethics and integrity. Was this for profit or altruism? Simply to ask this question is to demonstrate that in journalistic capitalism they can sometimes be the same. Here is another example: the emergence and growth of opposition to the disastrous and brutalizing American wars in Vietnam and Iraq wars depended on the Sulzbergers holding their family fortune hostage to the journalistic integrity of the *New York Times*. This immensely profitable media institution has long sustained the family's elite position in the class structure of city and nation.

How to control the state

To better understand citizenship, as both concept and institution, one must apprehend what differentiates democratic from non-democratic states. At issue is control of the state, since even the most rational of modern organizations, as Weber insisted, are non-bureaucratic at the top. Will the state be owned and controlled, in fact if not in principle, by an oligarchic party, religion, ethnic group, or class? At the heart of *Civil Sphere* is the suggestion that the state can be controlled – not only in principle but also, to some degree, in fact – by a differentiated solidarity sphere, one that is separated, not only from the state, but from other non-civil forces as well.

Rather than simply asserting the importance of such control, *Civil Sphere* develops a systematic and detailed theory about what it entails. In an early chapter of this book, for example, I trace a long-standing discursive structure – the 'discourse of civil society' – that has great inertial power. Because its vitality and integrity are taken for granted, evocative performances of this discursive structure – typifying one's self or group in terms of the sacred and one's opponents in terms of the profane side – have for centuries constituted the foundations for expansive movements of democratic control and radical movements for progressive change. Rather than leaving such discussions at the cultural level, moreover, I investigate how these discursive structures and claims become instantiated in institutional locations and organizations, how they come to be connected to material sanctions and rewards. There are not, on other words, simply discursively structured currents of public opinion, but communicative institutions that depend on professional practices, collegial associations, and organizational power; opinion polls that

are committed to statistical procedures of random selection, rationality, transparency, and accountability, and sustained by profitability; and civil associations whose self-interest propels them into the civil sphere to try to become persuasive in the democratic domain.

But the civil sphere is not only about communication. It is also about power. The challenge is to create civil power that can exercise control over the state, and, via such control, over such non-civil institutions as the economy in turn. It is because *Civil Sphere* is centrally concerned with such power that I devote so much space to regulative institutions. Citizenship means nothing unless its putatively universalistic status can be forced upon the state by institutions outside. Law is perhaps the most important of these, and it cannot be understand, as Turner (2007) suggests, only in the 'positive' sense of Weber or Schmitt, as norms that originate within, and are enforced by, the state. The seventh chapter of *Civil Sphere* is devoted, in fact, to demonstrating the alternative proposition. Law can be democratic only when it is nested within, and takes its moorings from, the democratic discourse of the civil sphere. Constitutions are 'laws about law' that most directly regulates states. Those who hold state power agree to obey the law, and judges – even when appointed by such state officials – issue legal judgments independent of the will of states. Such legal independence can be sustained, however, only if it is backed up by an independent franchise and the regular contestation of 'free and fair' elections, in which political parties aggregate material and status interests and battle over what ideology best articulates, crystallizes, and specifies the cultural abstractions that structure the discourse of civil society. The winners of these electoral battles become the civil sphere's representatives in the state, and they are expected to control it in the civil community's name.

Why should the politicians and administrative officials who possess a monopoly of violence, and even the general staff of the army itself, subordinate themselves to these 'immaterial' expressions of the civil will? It must be not only because they are afraid of direct or indirect injury to their persons and wealth, but also because they are committed to some of these principles themselves. To ensure that they act civilly no matter what their personal convictions, 'office' has become another major regulatory institution. Office obligations mediate between the concentration of wealth and power and the civil sphere's normative claims. Office demands that the organizational concentration of resources be used on behalf of others, whether inside the organization or outside of it, rather than for the personal interests of power-holders themselves. To the degree that the civil sphere is independent of the state, such self-dealing and nepotism are severely chastised as corruption. Such departures from office regulation are constructed as scandals, and indignation ripples through the communicative institutions of the civil sphere.

Certainly there are many national societies that are so deeply divided between tribe and sect that a wider solidarity is impossible, at least in the short run. In such situations, the instrumental power of the state qua state, the state in its Hobbesian form, becomes the last resort, the sheriff in a bad neighborhood who walks down the main streets and peers through the dark alleys, courageously defending the law, gun in hand. It is this kind of situation that seems, in fact, to be Turner's special concerns. 'In civil societies that are seriously divided by separate cultural traditions', he writes, we need to understand 'how such a fragmented civil society is managed or not by a secular state'. This is indeed a critical issue. The question that Turner does not address, however – and this is the issue that has preoccupied me above – is whence comes this wonderfully managing secular state? Despite his deep commitment to democracy, Turner actually finesses democracy and justice, defining his goal as simply achieving a 'successful and effective state'. If order and efficient governance are the principal goals, we are in trouble. This takes us back to the

deeply anti-democratic vision of the early Samuel Huntington, whose *The Soldier and the State* (1957) and *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968) justified anti-democratic regimes. Huntington's concern was power production, states that would have the capacity to suppress the babble and quash the teeming conflicts that marked civil societies, ruling in the name of efficiency, order, and managing deep divides. It was for this reason that the early Huntington's efforts became as deeply controversial in their own time and his later works have become in ours.

In his more recent deeply conservative works, Huntington (1996, 2004) has suggested that contemporary societies are engaged, both domestically and internationally, in an anti-civil, deeply primordial clash of civilizations, a clash that, ipso facto, justifies the need for an ever more powerful state. It is quite striking to see such left critics as Giorgio Agamben and Judith Butler agreeing with this right wing diagnosis, even as they despair of the solution that it implies. Such critics assert that Western societies, and the United States in particular, are not universalizing but primordial and orientalist in their aspirations, and that, in order to defend their civilizational privilege, they have short-circuited civil society and established an anti-democratic state. It is true, of course, that when democratic states are threatened by war, their constitutions allow 'exceptions' to be made. In his *Second Treatise*, John Locke carefully explained, against Hobbes, that only in such exceptional circumstances could civil guarantees be suspended, not in normal times even of conflictual peace. Carl Schmitt, the Nazi-sympathizing critic of merely bourgeois democracy, tried to legitimate dictatorship by arguing that such an abnormal situation was, in fact, a normal one. He declared that the political condition of continuous conflict warranted the suspension of civil liberties in a permanent way.

Citing the American prison in Guantanamo, and the rise of anti-immigration movements and global security concerns more globally, Turner worries, here and elsewhere (Turner 2007), that these critics are right. We may have entered into an irreversible process of 'enclavement', where building walls to keep groups out has replaced the incorporative impulses of civil society. It is no wonder that he turns away from civil society theory to search for an efficient and energetic secular state.

The antidote to the temptations of enclavement, however, is not strengthening state control but increasing civil mediation. It is, first, to make sure that suspensions of civil liberties remain singular and exceptional, and, second, to ensure that such anti-civil exceptions are as civil as they possibly can be. Against the claims of the Bush administration, for example, the US Supreme Court has fairly consistently expanded the judicial rights of the Guantanamo detainees, demanding that they be provided legal representation and the opportunity to defend themselves before Military Tribunal or civilian court. The nature and limits of torture for military prisoners have also been intensely debated in the American civil sphere, and efforts have been mounted to curtail the conservative government's violations of the Geneva Convention, culminating in Congressionally-supported legal guarantees. If the state of exception were actually the rule, these strenuous, and often successful, efforts at civil mediation could not be made.

Modes of incorporation as civil mediation

It is in the context of his search for an independent, quasi-utopian, and superbly managing (secular) state that, as I see it, Turner falls into the trap of distancing himself from multiculturalism. He asserts that a 'differentiated, diverse, and effervescent civil society may not be the optimum condition for a successful and effective state, producing instead a series of hostile enclaves'. In *Civil Sphere* I argue to the contrary, that it is not the *existence*

of ethnic plurality that creates enclaves and state-supported divisions, but, rather, how such potential divisions are *mediated* by communicative and regulatory institutions in the civil sphere. Is it actually the case that contemporary societies which have 'become deeply differentiated and divided by ethnicity, language and religion' have become so, as Turner tells us, 'primarily *as a result of* global migration and transnational movements' (italics added)? I would suggest a different reason. It is because such external societal processes have passed through the internal screen of a polarized, provincial, and primordial civil society. States need to *control* the diversity of citizens; it is only the civil sphere that has the capacity for *incorporating* them, for bringing outgroups into the core groups of societies so that there can be a more egalitarian distribution of resources and recognition. Or not.

To explain that there are, in fact, fundamentally different 'modes of incorporation' is the principle topic of the fourth and last section of *Civil Sphere*. Throughout the history of modernity, the assimilative mode has been dominant, whether in more democratic or less democratic states. Assimilation allows incorporation, but the terms upon which assimilation is granted are set by the primordial qualities of the core group. Multiculturalism distributes recognition more widely, demanding less stripping of identities and difference and widening the range of qualities considered capable of sustaining a civil society.

In light of these variations in the incorporative mode, it is both not enough, and far too much, to suggest, as Turner does, that 'the problem of securing public security and cultural cohesion in societies' has become 'the great social and political problem of this century'. Certainly, transnational movements and global immigration pose problems of identity and efficiency for every national civil sphere. As Michael Walzer has demonstrated so forcefully, no society is morally obligated to eliminate the border that separates inside from outside. But the insistence on border control is not the same as creating enclaves, immigrant camps, underclasses, and second-hand citizens. Nor is it the same as blocking the incorporation so that a narrowly circumscribed, primordial vision of the civil sphere can be sustained. Cohesion comes in different forms. If core groups demand a *volk gemeinshcaft*, that is one thing. If they can recognize the attractiveness and intelligence of civil qualities of different others, and allow non-core primordial qualities to display their civility, that is entirely another.

Multiculturalism, not secularity

Turner writes that 'the unspoken assumption of Alexander's study of the civil sphere and its politics is that the public remains a secular domain'. This is not at all the case. My argument, rather, is that the civil sphere should not be controlled by any single religion, or, for that matter, by any particular group. The solution to religious sectarianism is not secularity but incorporation and multiculturalism. The *parole* (speech) of public life can be religious, as long as the diverse religious groups physically co-present in the national community are allowed to speak the *langue* (language) of civil society. The key for this expansion of the national conversation is separating the qualities of civility from an exclusive attachment to any particular primordial form. Turner suggests that 'civil society remains unstable' because religious disputes are propelled by incommensurable beliefs. But it was precisely the recognition that a political community will be teeming with incommensurable beliefs that caused the later John Rawls to adopt the more contextual and cultural position of *Political Liberalism*. Acknowledging that creedal beliefs, whether religious or political, cannot be resolved, Rawls maintained that they could be put aside,

so long as there was in place a political culture committed to tolerance, plurality, autonomy and solidarity. In *Civil Sphere*, I suggest that Rawls erred in thinking that creedal beliefs could be put aside; the challenge, rather, is to see them, if not as equally correct, then as equally civil. Rawls was right, however, to insist that democracy and intense religious disagreement can exist together.

In *Civil Sphere*, I discuss this tense relationship between civil incorporation and religious antagonism in Chapters 18 and 19, which trace the arc of the 'Jewish Question' in Western history. In concluding the first of these chapters, I demonstrate that the German extermination of the Jews resulted not from Christian German anti-Semitism, but from the Nazis' suppression of German civil society. In the second of these chapters, I suggest that the unprecedented postwar American incorporation of Jewry resulted not from the secularization of American society, but from an historically unprecedented process of recognition, whereby Christian Americans came first to accept and then eventually to admire Jewish qualities, seeing in them powerful representations of the sacred qualities that animated the American civil sphere. Because of the importance of these chapters, which conclude *Civil Sphere*, I am puzzled by Turner's suggestion that my theory ignores religion, occupies itself only with race and ethnicity, and sees the solution to social divisions only in secular terms.

Islam and the possibility of multicultural incorporation

Turner writes that 'reformist Islam is a significant challenge to democratic theories of multiculturalism and secularism', theories he associates with my book. I would suggest, to the contrary, that reformist Islam is a problem only to the degree that 'Christian' or 'Jewish' or 'republican' nations resist a multicultural mode of incorporation, seeking refuge inside the narrowly assimilative model. The 'peaceful demand to wear head scarves in French schools', which Turner cites as a type case of such challenges, is not a demand that Christian, Jewish, or secular French people become Islamic, but a demand for the civil recognition of religious difference. It can be granted only if French core groups, on the left and the right, come to believe that wearing such a scarf is not a sign of dependence and dogma but of exercising autonomy and of being reflective in a civil way.

Let us consider more closely the 'recognition of Islam in Turkish public life', which Turner also cites as a challenge to my civil sphere model, as demonstrating that multiculturalism and civil society cannot be combined. Once again, I believe the opposite to be the case.[2]

Throughout the history of modern Turkey, there has been a strong feeling among the secular elites that those committed to public manifestations of Islamic faith are not fully trustworthy, that their motives and relations threaten the institutions of civil society. In recent years, as Turkey's Islamic regions have become modernized, this discussion has intensified, particularly after the Islamic-inspired Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002 and Turkey's application to the EU gained steam. Yet, while more strident, and more institutionally significant, the lines of this freighted cultural debate have scarcely changed. Turkish communicative institutions circulate rhetorical accusations about secular selfishness and elitism, on the one side, and about Islamic barbarism and irrationality, on the other. Turkey's regulative institutions also are deeply divided among themselves. Earlier this year, when the AKP nominated a party member, Turkey's popular Foreign Minister, to the presidency, the nation's Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional. The AKP then called a new election, and its victory increased its regulative power,

significantly enlarging the number of representatives it could send into the corridors of state power.

In the wake of this voting, some leaders of the secular elite, now firmly an electoral minority, questioned the election's legitimacy by polluting the AKP's civil standing. Alluding to what he claimed was widespread dissatisfaction with the Islamicist government's economic policies, the deputy chairman of the Republican People's Party suggested that 'there must be something beyond reason that makes these people vote for AKP despite their disappointments', and he concluded that the 'AKP has been trading on religion and manipulating people's sentiments'.[3] The phrase 'beyond reason' points to motives, and 'manipulating' to relations; each is a basic element in building the anti-civil discourse that constructs others as being incapable of participating in the institutions of a democratic society.

Rather than engaging in tit-for-tat, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is also party leader of the AKP, called on voters who had supported the AKP to resist applying anti-civil binaries to the secular side. He told them they should behave in a solidaristic manner with those who had opposed them. 'Our joy should never be the sorrow of those who do not think like us', he warned in his victory speech, cautioning 'beware that your happiness ... does not overshadow the happiness of others'. Addressing secular voters, Erdogan publicly underlined their rationality and independence, telling them 'we respect your choices' and affirming 'I also understand the message you sent in ballot boxes'. These different choices, the Prime Minister asserted, should be seen not as pointing to polarizing difference, but to a new multicultural mode of integration, one in which religious difference would affirm civil, not primordial solidarity: 'We consider your different choices as the richness of your democratic life'. To be sure, some of the Prime Minister's secular listeners were not reassured. A young businesswoman, remarking upon public images of political leaders' wives in headscarfs, insisted that such differences were fundamental, that looking religious could not complement civil solidarity. 'I don't believe the look of the Turkish government', she asserted, 'reflects the look of a democracy'. Other secular voters, however, disagreed. Explaining that 'for me, we have to be democratic', a young textile worker explained, 'I don't care what his wife wears'.

These discussions in Turkish society, which are echoed in the contentious European debate about Turkey's possible entry into the EU, illustrate the model of civil incorporation that is central to *Civil Sphere*. Solidarity is vital for sustaining democratic societies, and this does not depend on being religious or being secular. Feeling trust for distant others whom one will never know and with whom one might fundamentally disagree depends on the cultural construction of their motives and social relations. How one constructs these civil capacities is open to debate. It is difficult to be objective about whether this belief or that behavior indicates the capability for civil participation, or not.

I find these recent Turkish discussions reassuring. They suggest that instantiating civil society is a common endeavor, one not limited to a certain civilization, region, or religious belief. Such familiar discussions in an unfamiliar part of the world might also give us pause. Multicultural enthusiasms must not obscure the fact that some cultural commitments and social practices are, indeed, beyond the pale of democratic life, and that they must be treated as such. As Chad Goldberg (2007) has maintained, 'out-groups may *actually* engage in anti-civil practices that make incorporation more difficult'. In principle, I entirely agree. The willingness to resort to terror, for example, strikes at the core of the civil society project, as does – to our twenty-first century sensibilities – the subordination of women and demeaning rhetoric about infidels of other faiths. The challenge, however, is to condemn such anti-democratic rhetorics and practices

without broadening our polluting claims, without converting civil evaluation into primordial aggression. What we need to keep in mind, it seems to me, is that, in the history of civil societies, there has been little agreement, and nothing at all objective, about what is actually civil and what not, about the substantive character of civil qualities. We need the imagination to understand how peoples launched into different historical trajectories might articulate democratic codes and erect civil institutions that draw the lines differently than we ourselves do today. We should not shrink from expressing our own strong convictions about where these lines must be drawn, but we should be careful to avoid what might be called the 'spirit of pollution', a spirit that essentializes difference and converts moral conviction into self-righteousness. Again, this is not about secularity but about the construction of religious difference inside a civil society.

Conclusion: material constraint and the civil sphere

Toward the end of his critical review essay, Turner accuses me of ignoring 'the material constraints on democratic discourse', suggesting that the 'main preoccupations' of *Civil Sphere* 'are unexceptionally about race and ethnicity rather than with the scarcities associated with class, status, and power'. My first response to this criticism would be to ask, what is status if it is not race and ethnicity? Accepting for the moment these narrowly circumscribed Weberian categories, I would suggest that, if *Civil Sphere* is about anything, it is about status, the non-material hierarchies of society that rest upon the distribution of prestige. But as my earlier discussion of regulatory institutions indicates, *Civil Sphere* is about power as well, about the production of civil power and how its singular significance can control the state, such that coercion is exercised in a manner that extends solidarity and creates justice. Finally, while it is undeniably the case that *Civil Sphere* does not concentrate on class, it does contain several critical discussions that elaborate how this new theory would allow economic stratification to be approached in a different way. I have drawn attention to these discussions, and further elaborated them, in another recent reply to my critics (Alexander 2007b), pointing to some recent work that employs the civil sphere model to historically examine early British class struggle.

Turner acknowledges that 'European sociology may have overstated the importance of social class in negating the positive possibilities of a bourgeois civil sphere'. I can only strongly agree with this statement in principle, though I would not put the criticism in such a geographic, Europe-versus-America way.

After two centuries of sympathetic attention to the centrality of civil society for democracy, social theory in the mid-nineteenth century began to set this concept to the side. Shocked by the immense inequality and material impoverishment of early industrial society, and buffeted by the new conflicts it triggered, theorists began to place capitalism at the center of societal injury and increasingly devoted themselves to securing the antidote of a strong state. The liberal tradition, however, did not entirely disappear. There was, for example, a strand of Weberian thinkers who remained sensitive to how critical the democratic mediation of class conflict could be. Elie Halevy and Raymond Aron in France, T.H. Marshall in Britain, and Reinhart Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset in the United States each insisted that, while there are indeed material constraints on democratic discourse, it is only via democratic discourse, and the regulative institutions that it inspires, that material constraints can themselves be constrained. Big states, in themselves, are not the antidote to economic inequality. They must be compelled to moral action by an outraged civil sphere. As long as there remains some shred of democratic vitality, states can often be mediated in a civil way.

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Notes

1. A reply to Bryan Turner, 'Civility, civil sphere and citizenship: solidarity versus the enclave society', review article in the present issue of *Citizenship studies*.
2. The next five paragraphs are drawn from a reply to *The Civil Sphere* critics published in *Sociological quarterly* (Alexander 2007a).
3. All following quotations from Tavernise (2007).

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