

Contradictions

*The uncivilising pressures
of space, time and
function*

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In the civil society debate Jeffrey C. Alexander stands out as a key contributor. In this essay he points towards a critical revision of the very idea of civil society and our understanding of it.

My goal in this discussion is to give flesh and blood to the concept of 'civil society' - the skeleton concept that has hung in the closet of social theory for centuries, but has never been considered in a sufficiently empirical way. Theories of modernisation, development and rationalisation have assumed that broader solidary structures are created in the course of social development, as offshoots of other, more visible and more familiar structural processes - such as urbanisation, marketisation, socialisation, bureaucratisation, and secularisation. I would argue, on the contrary, that the construction of a wider and more inclusive sphere of solidarity must be studied in itself. From the beginning of its appearance in human societies, civil society has been organised, insofar as it has been organised at all, around its own particular cultural codes. It has been able to broadcast its idealised image of social relationships because it has been organised by certain kinds of communicative institutions; and departures from these relationships have been sanctioned or rewarded in more material terms by certain kinds of regulative institutions. Civil society has been sustained, as well, by distinctive kinds of personality structures and by forms of interaction that are of an unusual kind.

In thinking about such an 'independent' sphere of civil solidarity, the social theorist must walk along a delicate line. The codes, institutions and interactions that compose such a sphere must be considered in themselves, as structures in their own right. Their status cannot simply be read off from the condition of the spheres which surround civil society; they are not simply dependent variables. At the same time, the very briefest consideration makes it clear that, in a concrete sense, these internal modes of organisation are always deeply interpenetrated with the rest of society. At every point they are connected to activities in other spheres. They reach out beyond civil society narrowly conceived to set standards and create images in other spheres. Conversely, what happens in other spheres of society - what is possible and what not - has fundamental effects on the structure and operation of culture, institutions and interactions in civil society.

Indeed, the tension between what might be called the internal and external references of civil society is not merely a theoretical issue; it is a central empirical and ideological concern. To the degree that civil society gains autonomy from other spheres, to that degree it can define social relationships in a more consistently universalistic way. The binary structure of the discourse of civil society suggests that, even in the most ideal circumstances, this universalism will never be achieved in anything more than a highly proximate way. Because social reality is far from ideal, moreover, the autonomy of civil society normally is continually compromised and reduced. The exigencies of non-civil spheres, institutions and modes of interaction permeate civil society, and the discourse of repression is applied far and wide. The world of the 'we' becomes narrowed; the world of the 'they' becomes larger and assumes multifarious forms. It is not only groups outside of the nation state that are disqualified from gaining entrance to civil society, but many groups inside it as well.

It is to a systematic model of these boundary processes that I will devote this essay. In this task, 'idealist', or rather idealising, approaches to civility and the public sphere will not be of much help. Whether critical or apologetic, such approaches have suggested that civil society should be able to stand on its own and eliminate the influence of these other spheres: otherwise it will not be able to stand at all. From Aristotle and Rousseau to Arendt and Habermas, idealistic thinkers have embraced the utopianism of civil society, not as a regulating idea, or norm, but as a possible expression of real society. They have argued that it is

possible to create a social system that is thoroughly civil, solidaristic, altruistic, and inclusive, a social system that is homologous with civil society itself. They have dismissed the economic world as the world of 'necessity', one from which normative ideas of reciprocity are excluded *tout court*. They have rejected the political world as inherently bureaucratic and instrumental, as resting always and everywhere on domination alone. These 'systems' are conceived as inherently uncivil, as colonisers of the lifeworld of a solidary sphere that is doomed because it is vulnerable, by definition, to spheres of a stronger, more material kind. In a similar way, religion is conceived as an inherently dominating sphere, for it grounds understanding in a closed manner that is opposed to the open-ended and universalistic dialogue that marks civil understanding.

These approaches are not wrong in that they make forceful criticisms of the non-civil sphere. Indeed, I will make generous use of these and other such criticisms in my discussion below. These approaches err, rather, because they ignore the necessity for functional differentiation and complexity, not only in an institutional sense but in a moral one. The more developed the society, the more there emerge different kinds of institutional spheres and discourses. To be sure, the realisation of civil society is restricted by these spheres; at the same time, however, the civil sphere enters into institutional and moral interchanges with these worlds, despite the fact that they are of a very different kind. This interpenetration can cut both ways: civil society can colonise these other spheres; it is not simply a case of being colonised by them. To avoid the idealist fallacy, we must recognise that civil society is always nested in the practical worlds of the uncivil spheres, and we must study the compromises and fragmentations, the 'real' rather than merely idealised civil society, that results.

Civil society is instantiated in the real because social systems exist in real space, because they have been constructed in real time, and because they must perform functions that go beyond the construction of solidarity itself. Instantiation reduces the ideal of equal and free participation - it compromises and fragments the potentially civil sphere - by attaching status to primordial qualities that have nothing to do with one's status in civil society as such. Primordial qualities are those attributed to persons by virtue of their membership in a particular group, one that is thought to be based on unique qualities which those outside the group can, by definition, never hope to attain. Such qualities can be analogised to physical attributes like race and blood; but

almost any social attribute can assume a primordial position. Language, race, national origins, religion, class, intelligence and region - all these have been primordialised at different historical conjunctures. In different times and in different places, actors have become convinced that only those possessing certain versions of these qualities have what it takes to become members of civil society. They have believed that individuals and groups who do not possess these qualities must be uncivilised and cannot be included. 'Civil' in this way becomes contrasted with 'primordial'. The truth, of course, is that the very introduction of particular criteria is uncivil. Civil primordiality is a contradiction in terms.

Space: the geography of civil society

Civil society is idealised, by philosophers and by lay members alike, as a universalistic and abstract 'space', an open world without limits, an endless horizon. In fact, however, territory is basic to any real existing historical society. Territory converts the space of civil society into a particular 'place'. Civil society can become unique and meaningful, in fact, only as a particular place. It is not just some place, or any place, but our place, a 'centre', a place that is different from places that are outside its territory. Attachment to this central place becomes primordialised. As it becomes a primordial quality, territory divides; it becomes articulated with the binary discourse of civil society. The capacity for liberty becomes limited to those who have their feet on the sacred land, and the institutions and interaction of civil society become distorted and segmented in turn.

Nationalism can be conceived, in this sense, as the pollution of space that is demarcated by the territorial limits of states. Civility had, of course, always been circumscribed by centres, but before the sixteenth century these primordial territories had been conceived more locally, as villages, cities, regions, or simply as the physical areas inhabited by extended kinship networks and tribes. Beginning in the Renaissance, however, territory began to be viewed nationally. Attachment to one's place meant connection to the land of the nation. It is important to see that this geographical bifurcation was held to be true no matter how the national territory was defined, whether it was defined as a national community of language and blood, as in the German case, or an abstract universal community of ideas, as in post-revolutionary France. No matter how it was defined, only members of this nation were seen as capable

of reason, honesty, openness, and civility; members of others nations were not. Membership in other national territories seemed to generate dishonesty, distrust, and secrecy. They were naturally enemies.

This extraordinary restriction on universalism has had extraordinary consequences for the real history of civil societies. One consequence has been the continuous intertwining of real civil societies and war, the ultimate expression of relationships of an uncivil kind. Kant believed that democracies would never make war on other democracies; he suggested that the qualities of universalism and reason that characterised such societies would incline them to dialogue rather than force and would make it difficult for them to stereotype and brutalise people on the other side. But the democratic quality of other nations is always something that is very much open to debate, and the territorial bifurcation of civil charisma makes the civility of others much more difficult to discern. This explains why, throughout the history of civil societies, war has been a sacred obligation; to wage war against members of other territories has been simultaneously a national and a civilising task. Ancient Athens, the first real if limited democracy, whose polis has formed the model for civil societies until today, waged continuous war against its neighbouring city states, fighting against the barbarism that foreign territory implied. For the Renaissance city states in Italy, military glory was a central virtue, and their publics defended and extended their civil societies by waging war against 'foreign', yet equally civil communities in their national clime. The imperial expansion of Northern European nations from the sixteenth through to the nineteenth centuries certainly had economic motives; but it was inspired, as well, by the urgent need to civilise those who were enemies of civilisation because they were not fortunate enough to be nurtured in the same part of the earth as they.

But it is the great 'imperial republics', as Raymond Aron called them, that demonstrate this territorial bifurcation of civility in the most striking way. When the English and French fought against each other from the sixteenth through to the nineteenth centuries, they were societies that resembled each other in fundamental ways, each considering itself to possess a fundamentally civil, if not democratic dimension of social life. Yet elites and common people alike were in each nation convinced that it was only their national territories that allowed them to breathe free. Were the motives of Napoleonic France any different in their wars of forced national liberation, which placed in the same polluted categories

the 'enslaved' citizens of nations as diverse as Egypt and Germany, not to mention Italy and, potentially, England itself? And then there is the centuries-long military history of the very democratic United States, whose every war has been fought as a ritual sacrifice so that the oppressed of other countries may be Americanised, and free. This is not to say that many of these wars have not, in fact, been exercises in self-defence or national liberation. It is to suggest, however, that the connection between national territory and the binary discourse of civil societies has been striking indeed, and that it has always and everywhere inspired wars of an atrocious and punitive kind.

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The nationalist understanding of civility, moreover, has had fragmenting consequences of an internal kind. It has allowed those who have been excluded from civil society to be constructed as 'foreigners' and aligned with the territorial enemies of the nation against which wars are waged. Those who are excluded are often seen, in other words, not only as uncivil but as genuine threats to national security. In America, this has taken the form of 'nativism', defined by John Higham as the 'intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign connection'. In the course of American history, indeed, virtually every immigrant group has been subject to this construction, from Indians to African-Americans, from Catholic immigrants to Jews, from Germans in World War I to Japanese in World War II. There is no need to multiply examples of this kind, or to explain how French anti-semitism turned Dreyfus into a German spy, and German Nazism turned the Jewish 'nation' into the emblem of international capitalist conspiracy which was threatening the independence of the German state. Such facts are well known, but their theoretical implications are not well understood. The problem is not just that extremists and fundamentalists have so often threatened the tranquillity of democratic life. It is an issue of a much more systemic kind.

Because civil society is territorial and spatially fixed, it produces its own enemies. Even in the most civil of societies the discourse of liberty is bifurcated in a territorial manner. In making pollution primordial, this bifurcation makes repression more likely. This is why, in their quest for inclusion into the world of civil society, the excluded so often try to re-represent themselves as patriots. During the rise of German anti-semitism in Weimar, Jewish

organisations widely publicised the fact that tens of thousands of their compatriots had died for the Kaiser. Throughout their long struggle for inclusion, champions of the African-American community have pointed proudly to the fact that blacks have fought willingly in every major American war, beginning with the Revolution itself. According to T. H. Marshall, it was the patriotic participation of the British working class in World War II that created the cross-class solidarity that formed the basis for the postwar creation of the welfare state.

If nationalism restricts civility by bifurcating space 'outside' the nation, regionalism recreates a similar if sometimes less violent restriction for space within the nation. It is not only nations that are centres, but also, very conspicuously, the cities and regions within them. These domestic centres primordialise the discourse of liberty, constructing the periphery as lacking the charisma of national civility, as a kind of foreign territory inside the nation itself. City and country was for centuries one of the most pernicious distinctions of this kind. The German burgher proverb, 'the city air makes us free', was intended to be much more than a sociological observation about the effects of legal rights. Throughout the history of European civil societies peasants were likened to animals or, in the inimitable phrase of Karl Marx, to 'lumps of clay'. Regional divisions like North and South, and East and West, have always and everywhere carried a surplus of meaning. These regional divisions have fragmented the civil society of nations, its culture, its interactions, and often its regulative and communicative institutions. When they have overlapped with other kinds of exclusions - economic, ethnic, political, or religious - they have formed the basis for repressive closure movements, for the construction of ghettos, for brutal and aggressive exercises in forced incorporation, and for secessionist movements and for civil wars.

Time: civil society as historical sedimentation

Just as civil societies are always created in real space, so they are always created in real time. The utopian idea of civility suggests a timeless realm where people have always been thus, and always will be. Yet every civil society has actually been started, by somebody, at a particular time; and in virtually every territorial space different regimes of more and less civil societies have been started over and over again.

What is important about this temporality is that it becomes primordialised.

The time of origin of virtually every community is treated as a sacred time, one that is mythologised in national narratives and replicated by periodic rituals of remembrance. The founders of this community are sacralised as well. A charisma of time attaches to the founders of civil societies, who were there 'at the beginning'. Myths of origins not only give to these founders pride of place, but they attribute their accomplishment to the primordial characteristics of this founding group: to their religion, their race, their class, their language, to their country of origins if it is different from the nation they founded at a later time. The origin myths of civil society narrate the founders' role in terms of the discourse of liberty, but the capacity for liberty is temporalised. Only the primordial characteristics of the founding group, it is widely believed, allowed them to succeed in founding the national society at a such a propitious historical time.

If the characteristics of the founders are equated with the pure categories of civil society, it is only logical in a cultural sense that the qualities of those who come after them, insofar as they differ from the founders' own, should in turn be equated with the impure categories of this civil discourse. Temporality, in other words, creates a time order of civility, a rank order of categorical qualities that become the basis for claims of privilege within civil society itself. In American history, each new immigrant group has been considered polluted in certain crucial respects. The inability to speak English properly has been attributed to an incapacity for rationality and clarity. The extended kinship networks that typify the early forms of ethnic communities have been seen as a manifestation of closed rather than open behaviour, as breeding factionalism rather than open competition, as manifestations of secrecy rather than openness and trust. Different religious practices are invariably considered to be inferior ones, characterised in terms of emotionality rather than control and hierarchy rather than equality. The result is not simply 'discrimination' but repulsion and fear. There is the suspicion that these later arriving groups are outside the very categories of civil society itself. Can the newly arrived Irish immigrants ever, in fact, become good Americans? Can Jews? Can the newly arrived immigrants from China and Japan? How is it possible, since they are so different from us?

Yet, if peremptory arrival creates such bifurcations, the passing of time can also blur them. Ethnic succession is not simply an economic fact, created by ecological and material pressures that allow one group to leave a niche and

another to enter it. It is a cultural learning process that may be tempered by time. Familiarity does not lead to understanding exactly; rather, it leads to identification, a process that interpolates both space and time. Long term presence in the primordial place often cleanses and purifies primordial qualities, allowing what were once considered fundamentally different characteristics to be seen, instead, as variations on a common theme. This is not an evolutionary process that happens automatically. Bridging, connecting, and transversing is a project, one carried out by temporally disprivileged groups themselves. Making use of the communicative and the regulatory institutions of civil society, they demand to be reconsidered in more civil terms. In 'ethnic' literature, for example, writers re-represent their group's primordial qualities in terms of the 'common tradition', in both an aesthetic and a moral sense. They offer alternative framings of primordial traits, using humour, tragedy, or romance to allay danger and create a sense of familiarity. Immigrant social movements and well-known immigrant personalities present themselves as embodying traditional civil qualities. They argue that they are revivifying the national discourse of liberty, and that their ethnic qualities are complementary analogues of the very characteristics exhibited by the founding groups.

To understand fully the implications of temporality, however, one must see that the origins of a civil community are also reconstructed in a manner that is much less voluntaristic than the pacific qualities of immigration imply. The temporal concreteness of civil societies means that their foundings interrupted and displaced societies at some earlier time. They may have emerged from revolutionary upheavals against a more conservative or more radical regime; they may have been founded upon the military conquest of native peoples or resident national groups; they may have involved domination via purchase through commercial treaties or through political acquisition of a less direct type. When the radical English parliament organised its political revolution against kingship, it did not merely emphasise the expansion of civil society; rather, it presented its revolution as a victory of a different 'ethnic' group, the Anglo-Saxons, over the Royalist blood line. The French revolutionaries did not only make a universal and democratic insurrection, but they proclaimed a victory for the Gauls over the Franks. The American Revolution also involved temporal displacement, not only victory over the native American aboriginal peoples but over ethnic peoples who were not Anglo-Saxon in type. Whatever the specific

manner of displacement, the primordial characteristics of the dominated group are stigmatised; they are represented in terms of impure categories of the triumphant civil state. Civil society is, at its very origins, fragmented and distorted in what are often the most heinous ways.

These distorted self-understandings of civil society set off chain reactions that often invite 'refoundings' of an equally violent type. The repercussions of such posterior reconstructions can produce physical displacement and ghettoisation. Apartheid in South Africa occurred after the Afrikaaner 'refounding' of the earlier settler society founded by the English. When the Nazis refounded Germany as an Aryan and Christian state, it produced not merely physical displacement and coercion but mass extermination. Refoundings can produce centuries of struggles for liberation and oppression, which often lead to civil war, as did America's racial caste system, which was intrinsic to the founding of a civil society of the most profoundly democratic type.

The temporal bifurcations of civil societies, it is clear, intertwine with fragmentations founded on territory, particularly because both involve constructions that refer to the foundings of national societies. The primordial qualities that societies identify with liberty refer to founders who were 'there at the beginning'. When excluded national groups re-represent themselves as patriots, as people whose contributions to national security have been unfairly ignored, they are not only symbolically inserting themselves into the particular place of the nation but also into its historical time. Because historical memory preserves the charisma of time, it is always disputed by groups who are temporally displaced. Originating events, and later critical historical ones as well, are continually reconstituted in order to legitimate a new primordial definition of civility. Groups who have been excluded or dominated reconstrue their nation's history so that civility is described in broader and more expansive ways; groups which are threatened try to maintain more restrictive primordial definitions, or even to make them more narrow still. Social movements use communicative institutions to convince the public that 'history' must be revised; they use regulatory institutions to force the public to make illegal the laws that are implied by this outmoded version of history. (Note here the open conflict over the Statue of Liberty between new ethnic groups and the old Plymouth Rock Americans in the early 1900s.)

Function: the destruction of boundary relations and their repair

Societies are more than 'collectivities' framed by time and rooted in space. They are enormously complex social systems whose institutions become increasingly specialised, separated from one another not only by the differentiation of their physical organisation and staff, but also by the normative understandings that inform and regulate them. The possibility of institutional and cultural differentiation into increasingly separate spheres lies, of course, at the very heart of the notion of civil society that I have been advancing here. Its capacity for justice, for equality and liberty, its very existence, depends upon the creation of a space that can stand outside spheres of a more restrictive kind. Yet, as I have suggested in one way or another throughout this essay, this autonomy must be understood in a dialectical way. The very independence that makes civil society possible also makes it vulnerable.

There is a dangerous and fundamentally illusory tendency in classical and modern social theory: to understand functional differentiation as a process that contributes to stability and individuation. Functional differentiation may be integrative and ennobling, but it is by no means necessarily so. If the solidarity and universalism of civil society form one dimension of the social system, these qualities are challenged by spheres abutting civil society which have radically different functional concerns - which operate according to contradictory goals, employ different kinds of media, and produce social relations of an altogether different sort. The goal of the economic sphere is wealth, not justice in the civil sense; it is organised around efficiency, not solidarity, and depends upon hierarchy, not equality, to produce its goals. Politics produce power, not reciprocity; they depend upon authority, not independence; they demand loyalty, not criticism, and seek to exercise coercive, if legitimate, forms of social control. The religious sphere produces salvation, not worldly just deserts; it is premised upon a fundamental inequality, not only between God and merely human believers but between God's representatives - his shepherds - and those they must guide and instruct on earth; and no matter how radically egalitarian or reformed the message, the very transcendental character of religious relationships demands mystery and deference, not reciprocity or dialogue of a transparent kind. In the family, the species is reproduced in a biological and a moral sense; it is organised around eros and

love, not self-control and questioning; its organisation depends upon deference in a fundamental way.

Each of these non-civil spheres creates specifically functional kinds of inequalities. Fathers have historically assumed power over women and children in families; property-owners and professional managers organise, lead, and command economic workers; politicians and bureaucrats exercise domination over those who do not hold office in the state; religious notables, whether priests, rabbis, or sheikhs, act imperiously vis-à-vis lay people in their congregations. These privileged accumulations of power may be considered as usurpations, but they are not necessarily so. Certainly it is difficult to conceive how such non-civil spheres could operate in an independent or effective fashion without specialised experts whose authority allowed them to co-ordinate and direct institutional relations - which means, in fact, to 'govern' in some way. It is possible, in fact, to conceive of just and legitimate forms of such inequalities, insofar as the power over goods and process is acquired by persons with distinctive insights and effectively specialised skills.

The problem is that the privileged accumulations in these other spheres, to one degree or another, routinely and systematically become translated into the sphere of civil society itself. So do the particular goods upon which these accumulations of power are based. These goods themselves possess a distinctive charisma, as do the powers that have the authority to speak and act in their name. Money is important, not only because of its instrumental power but also because its possession is typically taken to represent a distinctive and respected achievement in the world of economic life. Grace in the sphere of salvation, patriarchal authority in the family, and power in the political sphere should be understood in similar ways. Yet, as a result of this charisma, these qualities become represented not merely as prestigious possessions acquired in specialised spheres, but as qualities that mean something in civil society itself. Stratification in these other spheres becomes translated into the bifurcating discourse of civil society. To be rich, for example, often seems to suggest moral goodness; insofar as it does, it is translated into the discourse of liberty. To be poor, on the other hand, often exposes one to degradation, to constructions that pollute one in various ways. In one sense this translation is complicated: it involves complex analogical chains between different semiotic codes, metaphorical transformations, and narratives that establish homologous

relationships between motives, relations, and institutions in different walks of life. In another sense, the translation is very simple. The privileged accumulations of goods in non-civil spheres are used to achieve power and recognition in civil society, to gain access to its discourse, control over its institutions, and to represent the elites of other spheres as ideal participants in the interactive processes of civil life.

I will speak of these boundary relationships in terms of facilitating inputs, destructive intrusions, and civil repairs. Boundary tensions can seriously distort civil society, threatening the very possibility for an effective and democratic social life. These distorting forces are destructive intrusions; in the face of them, civil society can make repairs by seeking to regulate and reform what happens in such non-civil spheres. Yet such subsystem interpenetration can also go the other way. Some of the goods and the social forms produced by other spheres actually facilitate the realisation of a more civil life. Conservative theorists and politicians, not to mention the elites in these noncivil spheres themselves, are inclined to emphasise the facilitating inputs of non-civil spheres to the creation of a good social life. Those on the liberal and radical left are more inclined to emphasise the destructive intrusions that these interpenetrations entail, and the repairs that must be made as a result. Neither side of this argument can be ignored in the effort to theorise civil society in a general way.

That the economic sphere facilitates the construction of a civil society in important ways is an historical and sociological fact that should not be denied. When an economy is structured by markets, behaviour is encouraged that is independent, rational, and self-controlled. It was for this reason that the early intellectuals of capitalism, from Montesquieu to Adam Smith, hailed market societies as a calm and civilising antidote to the militaristic glories of aristocratic life. It is in part for this same reason that societies which have recently exited from Communism have staked their emerging democracies on the construction of market societies. Yet, quite apart from markets, industrialisation itself can be seen in a positive vein. By creating an enormous supply of cheap and widely available material media, mass production lessens the invidious distinctions of status-markers that separated rich and poor in more restricted economies. It becomes increasingly possible for masses of people to express their individuality, their autonomy, and their equality through consumption and, in so doing, to

partake of the common symbolic inheritance of cultural life. Facilitating inputs are produced from the production side as well. As Marx himself was among the first to point out, the complex forms of teamwork and co-operation that are demanded in productive enterprises can be considered forms of socialisation, in which persons learn to respect and trust their fellow partners in the civil sphere.

Insofar as the economy supplies the civil sphere with facilities like independence, self-control, rationality, equality, self-realisation, co-operation, and trust, the boundary relation between these two spheres is frictionless, and structural differentiation seems to produce integration and individuation. It must be clear to all but the most die-hard free marketeers, however, that an industrialising, market economy has also thrown roadblocks in the way of the project of civil society. In the everyday language of social science these blockages are expressed purely in terms of economic inequalities, as class divisions, housing differentials, dual labour markets, poverty, and unemployment. These facts only become crystallised in social terms, however, because they are viewed as destructive intrusions into the civil realm. Economic criteria interfere with civil ones.

The stratification of economic products, both human and material, narrows and polarises civil society. It provides a broad field for the discourse of repression, which pollutes and degrades economic failure. Despite the fact that there is no inherent relationship between failure to achieve distinction in the economic realm and failure to sustain expectations in civil society - the lack of connection being the very point of the construction of an independent civil realm - this very connection is continually made. If you are poor you are often thought to be irrational, dependent, and lazy, not only in the economy but in society as such. The relative asymmetry of resources that is inherent in economic life, in other words, becomes translated into projections about civil competence and incompetence. It is often difficult for actors without economic achievement or wealth to communicate effectively in the civil sphere, to receive full respect from its regulatory institutions, or to interact with other, more economically successful, people in a fully civil way. Finally, material power as such, power garnered only in the economic realm, too often becomes an immediate and effective basis for civil claims. Despite the fact that the professionalisation of journalism has separated ownership and effective control,

capitalists can buy newspapers, communicative institutions central to civil society, and fundamentally alter their construction of the social scene.

Yet to the degree that civil society exists as an independent force, economically underprivileged actors have dual memberships. They are not only unsuccessful members of the economy; they also have the ability to make claims for respect and power on the basis of their only partially realised membership in the civil realm. On the basis of the implied universalism of solidarity in civil society, moreover, they believe these claims should find a response. They make use of the communicative institutions of civil society, of social movements that demand socialism (or simply economic justice), and of voluntary organisations (such as trade unions) that demand fairness to wage employees. Sometimes they employ their space in civil society to confront economic institutions and elites directly, winning concessions in face-to-face negotiations. At other times, they make use of regulatory institutions, like law and the franchise, to force the state to intervene in economic life on their behalf. While these efforts at repairs often fail, they often succeed in institutionalising 'workers' rights'. Civil criteria now enter directly into the economic sphere. Dangerous working conditions are prohibited; discrimination in labour markets is outlawed; arbitrary economic authority is curtailed; unemployment is controlled and humanised; wealth itself is redistributed according to criteria that are antithetical to those of a strictly economic kind.

Each of the other non-civil spheres has also fundamentally undermined civil society in different times and different ways, especially as they have become intertwined with the segmentations created by time and space. In Catholic countries, Jews and Protestants have often been construed as uncivil and prevented from fully entering civil life. For most of the history of civil societies, patriarchal power in the family has transferred directly into a lack of civil status for women. Scientific and professional power has empowered experts and excluded ordinary persons from full participation in vital civil discussions. Political oligarchies, whether in private organisations or in national governments themselves, have used secrecy and manipulation to deprive members of civil society from access to information about many of the crucial decisions that affect their collective life.

In the course of Western history these intrusions have been so destructive that the social movements organised for repair, and the theorists who articulate

their demands, have come to believe that these blockages are intrinsic to civil society itself. Socialists have argued that civil society is essentially and irrevocably bourgeois, that as long as there are markets and private property participants in the economic realm, people can never be treated in a more respectful and egalitarian way. Radical feminists have argued that civil societies are inherently patriarchal, that the very idea of a civil society is impossible to realise in a society that has families which allow men to dominate women. Zionists have argued that European societies are fundamentally anti-semitic. Black nationalists have claimed that racism is essential, and that the civil realm in white settler societies will always, and necessarily, exclude blacks.

In response to these arguments, radical intellectuals, and many of their followers as well, have chosen to exit rather than to exercise voice. They have demanded the construction of an entirely different kind of society, one in which the uncivil nature of the spheres that border civil society would be fundamentally changed. Sometimes these revolutionary demands, and the reactionary efforts to undercut them, have destroyed civil societies. To the degree that national regimes have institutionalised some genuine autonomy for their realms, however, these critics have succeeded not in making revolutions but in creating dramatic reforms. Revolutionary efforts have usually failed, but the claims they have lodged have often succeeded in expanding civil society in highly significant ways. The result, rather than exit, has been the incremental but real integration of formerly excluded groups. This inclusion has not been complete by any means, but it has been substantial nonetheless.

To the degree that there is some institutionalisation of civil society, economic, political, and religious problems are not treated merely - nor sometimes even primarily - as problems within these spheres themselves, but rather as problems of 'our society'. They are treated, both by those making the claims and by those on the receiving end, as deficits in civil society itself, as forces that threaten society's cohesiveness, integrity, morality, and liberty. This is particularly the case because the functional stratification of civil society often merges with the stratification caused by the instantiation of civil society in time and space. Functional problems become intertwined with primordial questions about the capacities generated by race, language, region, timing of arrival, and loyalty to the nation itself. This intertwining makes it even more likely that each of these different kinds of conflicts - functional, spatial, and temporal - will be seen not

incidentally but primarily as demands for inclusion into civil society as such. In this situation, inclusion becomes an end in itself, not merely a means of particular repair. Conflicts become struggles for identity and social recognition, for repairing the fragmentation and distortion of civil society self.

This contribution is an extract from a larger project the author has been working on, entitled 'Possibilities of Justice - Civil Society and Its Contradictions'.