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From Personal to Political Responsibility: Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Anticipatory
Responsibility

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Abstract

Responsibility is a central political concept, yet the dynamics of contemporary political life call into question commonsense accounts of individual moral responsibility; it is difficult to ascribe responsibility to individual agents when faced with political dilemmas like global climate change. In response to this dilemma, this project engages two questions. First, how do different interpretations of responsibility both emerge from different political discourses and simultaneously shape different responses to political dilemmas? Second, in contrast to ubiquitous narratives of personal responsibility, what contending interpretations could better address contemporary political dilemmas? Drawing on Friedrich Nietzsche's writings and engaging American political discourse, liberal political philosophy, and contemporary political theory, I advance three main claims. First, responsibility should be understood politically: it has an essentially contestable meaning, particular meanings are invoked to settle political disputes, and different invocations envision contending accounts of how the political world is and should be structured. Second, dominant narratives of personal responsibility generate two political pathologies. They both obscure the role of social, economic, and political institutions and structures in generating injustice and generate and direct resentful ascriptions of blame towards vulnerable people for their own suffering. Third, drawing on Nietzsche, I advance a contending interpretation of responsibility, which I call anticipatory responsibility: the obligation that political communities have to maintain the possibility of human flourishing into the future. Rather than retrospectively distributing guilt, debt, or blame, anticipatory responsibility envisions a mobilized democratic citizenry acting claiming responsibility for the structure of the political world, by working to build, reform, and maintain just political institutions. Anticipatory responsibility both can better orient political thought and action, and can only be discharged through political engagement.

Acknowledgements

While it is a cliché to acknowledge that a dissertation cannot be complicated without the help and support of others, failing to do so seems particularly egregious in my case, given my criticism of narratives of personal responsibility. The completion of this dissertation itself should stand as evidence supporting the claim that no one can completely determine their lives, even if none of my substantive arguments are persuasive.

First, I must thank my advisor and dissertation chair, Lars Tønder, for guiding and informing this project from its infancy to its culmination. Lars encouraged me to expand my theoretical and imaginative horizons, while providing the incisive criticism necessary to hone the argument. I doubt I will ever be able to fully account for the influence of his insight, commentary, and encouragement on this project. Lars was also the consummate advisor, infinitely patient and responsive; he always found time to help guide me from the theoretical labyrinths I had lost myself within and support my scholarly and professional development, regardless of time-zone differences.

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In addition to my teachers, I thank my colleagues, who have read multiple versions of every chapter at the Political Theory Workshop. Their incisive critiques, productive suggestions, and uplifting reassurance made this study possible. In particular, I want to thank Désirée Weber, with whom I had the pleasure of co-coordinating the workshop for two years, as well as Jeni Forestal, Javier Burdman, Boris Litvin, and Christina LoTempio, who served as discussants for my

Note on Texts, Translations, and Citations

Notes to Nietzsche's texts are noted in the text parenthetically, with an abbreviated title followed by aphorism number or section title. For ease of reference, I us the following translations of:

- *A*: *The Anti-Christ*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. In *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*. New York: Penguin Pres, [1895] 1990.
- *AOM*: *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. In *Human, All Too Human Volume II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1879] 1990.
- *BGE*: *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. Judith Norman. Ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1886] 2002.
- *BT*: *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*. Trans. Ronald Spiers. In. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Spiers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1872] 1999.
- *D*: *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1881] 1997.
- *DW*: "The Dionysian Worldview." Trans. Ronald Spiers. In. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Spiers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1870] 1999.
- *GM*: *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic*. Trans. Carol Diethe. Ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1887] 1998.
- *GS*: *The Gay Science*. Trans. Josefine Nauckhoff. Ed. Bernard Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1887] 2001.
- *HC*: "Homer's Contest." Trans. Carol Diethe. In. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 174-182. Ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1872] 1998.
- *HH*: *Human, All Too Human, Volume I*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1879] 1990.
- *HL*: "On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life." Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. In *Untimely Meditations* ed. Daniel Breazeale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1874] 1997.
- *SE*: "Schopenhauer as Educator." Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. In *Untimely Meditations* ed. Daniel Breazeale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1874] 1997.
- *TI*: *Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. In *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*. New York: Penguin Pres, [1895] 1990.
- *TL*: "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense." Trans. Ronald Spiers. In. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Spiers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1872] 1999.
- *WS*: *The Wanderer and his Shadow*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. In *Human, All Too Human Volume II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1880] 1990.
- *TSZ*: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. Adrian Del Caro. Ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert Pippin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1885] 2006.
- *WP*: *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books [1901] 1968.

References to Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks, when not collected in *The Will to Power*, are from:
- *KSA*: *Kritische StudienAusgabe im 15 Banden* Ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999.

Translations from the *KSA* are my own. When questions of translation emerged, I consulted the *KSA* and alternate translations of Nietzsche's works, and have noted as such in the text. Unless noted, I have maintained the emphases and typographical features of the texts.

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Introduction:
The Politics of Responsibility

Thus: it is because man regards *himself as free, not because he is free, that he feels remorse and pangs of conscience. – This feeling is, moreover, something one can disaccustom oneself to, and many people do not feel it at all in respect of actions which evoke it in others. It is a very changeable thing, tied to the evolution of morality and culture and perhaps present in only a relatively brief span of world-history. – No one is accountable for his deeds, no one for his nature; to judge is the same thing as to be unjust. This also applies when the individual judges himself. The proposition is as clear as daylight, and yet here everyone prefers to retreat back into the shadows and untruth: from fear of the consequences.*
-Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*: 39 (1879)

For there to be institutions, there needs to be a type of will, instinct, imperative that is anti-liberal to the point of malice: the will to tradition, to authority, to a responsibility that spans the centuries, to solidarity *in the chain that links generations forwards and backwards* ad infinitum […] *The West in its entirety has lost the sort of instincts that give rise to institutions, that give rise to a* future: *it might well be that nothing rubs its 'modern spirit' the wrong way more than this. People live for today, people live very fast, – people live very irresponsibly: and this is precisely what people call 'freedom.' The things that* make *an institution into an institution are despised, hated, rejected: people think that they are in danger of a new sort of slavery when the word 'authority' is so much as spoken out loud. The value instincts of our politicians, our political parties, are so decadent that* they instinctively prefer *things that disintegrate, that accelerate the end…*
-Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*: "Expeditions of an Untimely Man," 39 (1889)

I- The Dilemma of Responsibility

Contemporary American politics is suffused with moralistic narratives of "personal responsibility:" individuals are solely responsible for their life outcomes and irresponsible individual behavior is the root cause of social ills, such as poverty, racial and gender disparities, and crime. From Ronald Reagan's 1968 call to "restore the American precept that each individual is accountable for his actions,"[1] to Barack Obama's defense of an America that stands for "the notion that no matter who you are or where you came from or the circumstances into which you are born, if you work hard, if you take responsibility, then you can make it in this country,"[2] personal responsibility is the shibboleth of American political discourse. Echoing the epigraph from Friedrich

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[1] "G.O.P. Testimony on Violence," *The New York Times*, August 1 1968.
[2] Barack Hussein Obama, "Remarks by the President on "My Brother's Keeper" Initiative, February 27, 2014," (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, 2014), 2.

Nietzsche, very few challenge this consensus, "for fear of the consequences," whether social or electoral.

However, the nature of political life – its interconnectedness, complexity, and uncertainty – calls into question the idea that individuals should be held solely accountable for their actions. Political thinkers have long challenged the assumptions underlying personal responsibility by pointing to the embeddedness of political action within social, economic, and political structures. Whether described as Marx's "given and inherited" circumstances,[3] as Arendt's "web of human relations,"[4] as Sarte's practico-inert structures,[5] or in terms of structuration theory,[6] political life creates problems of distributed agency: one's actions are not freely chosen in a vacuum, but enabled and constrained by the structures and institutions within which one is embedded. More recently, Bruno Latour and Jane Bennett have intensified these arguments, contending that the ensemble of material objects surrounding human life are not merely passive matter, but actively contribute to political action.[7] Given this mutual imbrication between individuals and the world they inhabit, to isolate individuals as solely and completely responsible for their actions overlooks much of the constituents of human behavior.

The problem of delegated authority is similarly constitutive of politics, as individuals live and act not solely as individuals but members of political communities that speak in their name. The modern state, as Hobbes argued, is legitimated by at least an implicit authorization by the people,

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[3] Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *Marx: Later Political Writings*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1869] 2010), 32.

[4] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, [1958] 1998), 183-84.

[5] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, vol. Volume 1: Theory of Practical Ensembles (New York: Verso Books, [1960] 2004), 45-46.

[6] Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

[7] Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik: Or How to Make Things Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

allowing the sovereign to speak in their name as they are "many Authors, of every thing their

Representative saith, or doth in their name."[8] In modern liberal democracies, where the

authorization of state action is explicit, questions of responsibility become even further vexed.

Governments of democratic states can act against the wishes of their citizens despite being

legitimately elected. As such, democratic citizens can become implicated in state sponsored injustice

that they neither approve of nor intend. In such situations, following Eric Beerbohm, "it isn't even

clear that the ordinary notions of right and wrong – along with their companion conceptions of

moral responsibility and blame – are well placed to explain how we can act impermissibly by

supporting systems that are outside our control, and often exist beyond our powers of

comprehension."[9]

Similarly, intuitive conceptions of personal responsibility do not fully capture the ways in

which individuals can be complicit in injustices. Ordinary, legal and seemingly moral behavior can

produce massive human suffering because of unjust social structures and economic institutions.

Rather than being the result of deliberate or malevolent action, "most injustice," Judith N. Shklar

writes, "occur continuously within the framework of an established polity with an operative system

of law, in normal times."[10] In globalized systems of production and distribution or in forms of

bureaucratic organization, injustices are not only generated passively, but the organization of these

institutions systematically occludes the ascription of responsibility. In these systems, "organized

irresponsibility" reigns.[11] Iris M. Young articulates this point particularly forcefully in her analysis of

the unjust working conditions of the global garment industry. Describing this as a case of "structural

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[8] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1651] 1996), I.16, pg. 115.
[9] Eric Beerbohm, *In Our Name: The Ethics of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
[10] Judith N. Shklar, *The Faces of Injustice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 19.
[11] See: Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. Mark Ritter (London: Sage Publications, [1986] 1992); Anthony Giddens, "Risk and Responsibility," *The Modern Law Review* 62, no. 1 (1999); Scott Veitch, *Law and Irresponsibility: On the Legitimation of Human Suffering* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

injustice," which create a "systematic threat of domination and deprivation,"[12] Young shows that

such injustices are produced by a global socio-economic ensemble of action, most of which consists

in individuals "following the rules" and "trying to accomplish their legitimate goals" (63). In such

case, it is difficult, if not inappropriate, to assign responsibility – when conceived of as analogous to

blame – to any individual, or corporate individual, which risks naturalizing unjust social, economic,

and political structures.[13]

The challenge of global climate change brings these inadequacies into sharper relief. Despite

assertions that "we are, of course" responsible for global climate change,[14] it remains less than clear

that responsibility for climate change is anything close to an obvious matter. The complexity of

atmospheric carbon systems entail that one's contributions to climate change are irreducible to one's

carbon emissions or consumption habits.[15] Models attempting to attribute responsibility for

historical carbon emissions are plagued with immense uncertainty depending on how states and

regions are counted and what sources are included.[16] Additionally, the path dependent nature of

global climate change risks further undermining moral intuitions, as individual consumption and

emissions patterns are shaped by historical economic and energy developments: the types of energy

used today are the result of technological advancements and political decisions made generations

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[12] Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 52. Chapter 4 will return to Young's work in greater detail, especially her defense of a "social connections model" of political responsibility.
[13] *Ibid.*, 11. Shklar argues that such injustices are often treated as "bad luck," which serves an ideological function to treat "passive injustice as misfortunate by imposing a sense of tragic inevitably upon events that are in fact entirely amenable to purposive human alteration." Shklar, *Faces of Injustice*, 70. Chad Lavin argues that this is a function of the grammar of personal responsibility which: "compels casting events as the expression of anonymous structures or identifiable individuals; its conceptual blackmail compels either a liberal commitment to individualism or an abandonment of responsibility through the language of structural determinism." Chad Lavin, *The Politics of Responsibility* (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 2008), 87.
[14] John Nolt, "Greenhouse Gas Emission and the Domination of Posterity," in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, ed. Denis G. Arnold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 73.
[15] Dale Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle against Climate Change Failed - and What It Means for Our Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 158.
[16] Michel Den Elzen and Michiel Schaeffer, "Responsibility for Past and Future Global Warming: Uncertainties in Attributing Anthropogenic Climate Change," *Climatic Change* 54, no. 1-2 (2002).

earlier. Hence climate change undermines many standard moral principles of individual

responsibility, which, given divergent and unreliable moral intuitions about carbon emissions, can

hamstring effective responses.[17]

The temporal extension of climate change also poses significant problems for attributing

responsibility. Conceptually, climate change presents an extreme version of Derek Parfit's non-

identity problem, as it is difficult to account for our responsibilities to non-existent future

generations, especially when actions taken in the present would fundamentally change the cohort of

such generations.[18] Furthermore, a focus purely on individual responsibility, even when scaled up to

the level of states, risks occluding the political and economic histories of development which have

led to a differential distribution of carbon contributions, vulnerability to the worst effects of climate

change, access to renewable energy sources, and capacity to adapt to a changing climate.[19]

Developing nations are simultaneously the least responsible historically for greenhouse gas

emissions and most vulnerable to its harshest effects. It further violates intuitions about fairness to

require developing nations to forgo the use of non-renewable energy that developed nations enjoyed

without fault for generations.[20] As Dale Jamieson summarizes, "Today we face the possibility that

the global environment may be destroyed, yet no one will be responsible."[21]

This tension between the need to identify discrete, responsible agents and its impossibility in

situations of complexity and uncertainty, is not limited to climate change. Similar dynamics can be

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[17] Walter Sinnott-Armstsrong, "It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations," in *Perspectives on Climate Change: Science, Economics, Politics, Ethics*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Richard B. Howarth (Amsterdam: Elsevier JAI, 2005).

[18] Derek Parfit, "Energy Policy and the Further Future: The Identity Problem," in *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings*, ed. Stephen M. Gardiner, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1983] 2010).

[19] J. Timmons Roberts and Bradley C. Parks, *A Climate of Injustice: Global Inequality, North-South Politics, and Climate Policy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007).

[20] On other challenges of climate change to global justice principles see: Dale Jamieson, "Energy, Ethics, and the Transformation of Nature," in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, ed. Denis G. Arnold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[21] *Ibid.*, "Ethics, Public Policy, and Global Warming," *Science , Technology, & Human Values* 17, no. 2 (1992): 149.

seen in discussions of global economic inequality, where legal and moral economic transactions in one sphere of the global economy render one complicit in a massively unequal global distribution of goods, opportunities, and conditions. One is not responsible for the nationality of one's birth, yet differences in birth location correlate with massive disparities in economic opportunity, education and political rights.[22] Implicit bias and structural discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities, women, and other marginalized groups present another form of this tension. Discriminatory behavior is not simply reducible to explicit discriminatory or bias that traditional theories of personal responsibility could explain. Instead, they are reproduced through socio-economic structures and political institutions that disproportionately favor one group over another. Questions of historical injustices, such as colonialism, the slave trade, or the institutionalized racism of Jim Crow, raise analogous questions as the individuals causally responsible for the injustice are long dead and holding contemporary citizens accountable or blameworthy for the unjust actions of their nation's history violates some moral intuitions. These examples all point to what I call the dilemma of responsibility the disconnect between the psychological and political needs to hold individuals responsible and the difficulty of utilizing intuitive conceptions of moral responsibility amidst the complexity of political life.

II- Nietzsche's Intervention

Motivated by the need to respond to such pressing political predicaments as climate change, this study takes up the politics of responsibility. My analysis revolves around two questions. First, how are different conceptions and narratives of responsibility shaped by social and political relationships, and how do these different conceptions, in turn, shape different accounts of politics? In short, how are responsibility and political imagination co-constitutive? Second, what alternative

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[22] See: Ayelet Shachar and Ran Hirschl, "Citizenship as Inherited Property," *Political Theory* 35, no. 3 (2007).

possibilities for political thought and action can be generated by recovering contending

interpretations of responsibility that have been disavowed or displaced by dominant conceptions?

How might responsibility be imagined to better address contemporary political dilemmas?

As the epigraphs suggest, these dilemmas of responsibility plague Nietzsche's thought. On

the one hand, he vehemently insists on the artifice of responsibility. Individuals are not held

responsible due to any natural capacity or inherent quality; responsibility is a moral norm generated

through social and political forces. That modern politics is built on the backs of self-responsible

individuals is an entirely contingent outcome, but one that retains a tremendous hold on moral and

political thinking, shaping both affective responses and political practices. Even if there are strong

philosophical and scientific reasons to be skeptical about doctrines of responsibility, they remain

persistent and constitutive elements of politics.

On the other hand, Nietzsche suggests that modern individuals are irresponsible in a

different sense: the conditions of modern politics systemically inhibit responsible behavior.

Buttressed by individualist foundations and a general skepticism towards authority, modern political

institutions – liberalism in particular – fail to bind individuals together into a cohesive political

whole. Immediate individual interests organize politics with little regard paid to the vitality of

political institutions or the long-term goals of the political community. Against the intuition that

individuals should be held responsible because they are free, Nietzsche suggests that modern

freedom is precisely the absence of responsibility: freedom means that one is not responsible to any

authority but oneself.

This creates a perplexing tension for the reader: the belief in freedom and responsibility are

so entrenched into the modern psychological and political formations that they are unlikely to be

dislodged, while at the same time culminating in a politics of generalized irresponsibility. Nietzsche's

contention that responsibility is a contingent moral artifact rather than a metaphysical truth is

consistent with his well-known critique of morality. However, Nietzsche's critique of modern politics as irresponsible suggests that his own assessment of responsibility is far more ambivalent. These interpretive tensions mirror the political theoretical dilemma of responsibility, and my wager is that attending to these tensions can prove generative for articulating an account of responsibility oriented towards the demands of politics.

While this study engages a broader archive than Nietzsche's writings alone, his thinking systematically guides this project. Methodologically, Nietzsche's genealogical and agonistic approach, which understand moral values as the historically contingent results of social and political conflicts, informs my own move to study responsibility through the lens of political discourse rather than a philosophical analysis. Substantively, I draw on Nietzsche's thought in both my critical account of commonsense conceptions of personal moral responsibility and my defense of an alternative political understanding of responsibility. This is not to suggest that Nietzsche's thought holds the solution to contemporary political dilemmas waiting to be unlocked. Instead, I argue that Nietzsche's thought contains valuable theoretical resources that can be mobilized beyond the specific contexts and occasions of their writing. Placing his thought in a new context and in dialogue with new interlocutors simultaneously introduces a useful perspective on contemporary political and theoretical dilemmas while also shedding new light on the politics of Nietzsche's thought.

In response to these political and hermeneutic challenges, this study advances three central and interrelated arguments. First, responsibility is best studied politically, as an essentially contestable concept, both emerging within and shaping political discourses. Different meanings of responsibility emerge both from different political contexts and contending political discourses. These contending discourses hold different assumptions ontological and normative assumptions about human beings, nature, power, freedom, action, and community. As such, different interpretations of responsibility are often not only irreconcilable but envision significantly different conceptions of politics. Analyses

of responsibility that center on the metaphysics of agency or reconstructing the conditions under which an individual can be held morally responsible, risk obscuring relations of power underpinning their invocation and misunderstanding their role in political discourse and debate. The goal should not be to settle responsibility's meaning once and for all, but to trace the political assumptions and imaginaries of contending uses or conceptions of responsibility in both political discourse and the history of political thought. Such inquiry is both illuminating in itself and a necessary prerequisite for theorizing responsibility in a critical or normative perspective.

Second, dominant conceptions of personalized moral responsibility in American political discourse are plagued by two pathologies that ultimately depoliticize the dilemmas to which they are responding. First, isolating individuals as simultaneously the sole subjects and objects of responsibility – individuals are solely responsible for the lives, and their lives alone – obscures social, economic, and political structures, casting political relationships as mere aggregates of individual behavior. These structures are not neutral background conditions, however, but generate forms of suffering and injustice through their orderings of the world. Second, narratives of personal responsibility become infused with resentful and self-righteous moralism reinterpreting suffering and injustice as the well-deserved consequences of irresponsible behavior. Because an accountable individual can and must be identified for all wrong-doing or social harm, these narratives justify political strategies of victim-blaming and scapegoating, which blame the vulnerable for the very injustices they suffer.

These two pathologies build on each other. Precisely because the structural causes of injustice are obscured, the only potential agent to be held responsible are the suffering themselves. When viewed as neutral or fair background conditions, it is difficult to attribute differential life outcomes to anything other than personal behavior. When combined, these pathologies depoliticize political dilemmas: rather than understanding them as political questions, involving relationships of

power, institutional design, and structural position, narratives of personal responsibility frame these as the ethical, legal, or economic questions involving the choices and behaviors of individuals. Questions concerning the justice of economic structures are displaced by bootstraps narratives of hard work and self-reliance. Together these dynamics intensify the dilemma of responsibility. The depoliticization generated by narratives of personal responsibility yield two equally unsatisfying responses. On the one hand, there is a temptation to abdicate and defer responsibility, thereby casting such injustices as tragic or inevitable and therefore beyond the scope of politics. On the other hand lies the temptation to intensify ascriptions of responsibility, reject this dilemma as false, and insist that irresponsible behavior and the refusal of contemporary politics to hold individuals responsible for their actions are the true causes of these injustices.

Against these unsatisfying responses, my third argument develops and advocates for the value of an alternative interpretation of responsibility, which I call "anticipatory responsibility." Drawn from Nietzsche's critique and revaluation of moral responsibility, anticipatory responsibility reorients both responsibility's temporality and object. Rather than retrospectively ascribed to adjudicate moral debts and liabilities, it is directed towards the future as something to be taken. Rather than accounting for one's past behaviors, anticipatory responsibility claims responsibility for future human flourishing, conceived of as the ability for humans to develop and enhance their powers in accordance with meaningful and animating values to which they are genuinely attached. Anticipatory responsibility describes the obligations of individuals and communities to ensure that future generations will be able to live their individual collective lives in meaningful and creative ways. Rather than attempting to settle questions of justice by imposing an absolute moral law, anticipatory responsibility acknowledges the uncertainty generated by the inexorable flow of time and instead conceives of responsibility as an ongoing project of safeguarding and shaping an emerging future.

The passage of time means that the object of responsibility constantly proceeds beyond both the lifetime and causal reach of any individual; hence, it is described as anticipatory. Because of the uncertain and tenuous relationship across generations, the direct object of anticipatory responsibility cannot be future generations themselves, as they are beyond one's direct influence. Instead, taking anticipatory responsibility for human flourishing is to care for and reform the structure of the world: the web of interconnected material, social, and political networks and relationships that constitute the conditions of human life. These structures, which both preceded and will outlast any one lifetime, serve as enabling and constraining conditions for human action; the structure of the world determines if humans, and just as important which humans, are able to develop their capacities in accordance with a meaningful life. While an individual or community may not be morally responsible for creating these structures, given their spatial and temporal dispersion, their participation and contribution within these structures sustains them. Thus, anticipatory responsibility requires taking responsibility for a world that one did not create, acting as if one were responsible for these structures, and working to build, maintain, and reform structures that facilitate human flourishing. It orients action by anticipating a future world that one will never see, but for which one can care.

This contending interpretation of responsibility, imagines a divergent politics than personalized moral responsibility. While Nietzsche's revaluation of responsibility, as achieved in Zarathustra's itinerant philosophy, may suggest an aesthetic or ethical project achievable only by withdrawing from the political world, I contend that anticipatory responsibility can be interpreted as a political ethic. Anticipatory responsibility locates individual as embedded in political structures and interconnected to other political actors, but it also appeals to the desire to leave a lasting legacy. Thus, it provides the cognitive and affective resources to orient political action. Simultaneously, the ambition of anticipatory responsibility – ensuring that the world is structured to enable human

flourishing – is impossible to satisfy through philosophic reflection or aesthetic self-care alone. Taking responsibility for the structure of the world is only possible by generating political power and mobilizing resources that can make authoritative decisions and lasting institutions. This burden, furthermore, is too great to be borne by any individual alone, thus necessitating concerted action from mobilized and engaged political communities to take responsibility for the world they inhabit.

My argument is not that personal responsibility is wholly inappropriate or anachronistic, and should be eliminated in favor of anticipatory responsibility. Instead, because they rely on different assumptions about and visions of political life, they themselves are different responses to the challenges of politics. The ideological and discursive dominance of personal responsibility limits the breadth of political imagination, foreclosing possible political questions and rendering certain responses unthinkable. Recovering anticipatory responsibility as a contending interpretation both offers the reminder that ascriptions of personal moral responsibility are political decisions and the suggestion that the exigencies of political life may demand other forms of response.

III-Anticipating the Path Ahead

This argument proceeds as follows. This study begins with two chapters that work to defamiliarize intuitive conceptions of responsibility, opening a space for contestation over its meaning. Chapter One, "Interrogating Responsibility," begins this process by arguing for studying responsibility politically. Drawing on theories of political language and concepts, I identify three aspects of such inquiry: it treats political concepts as essentially contestable, it attends to how the meaning of contestable concepts is settled in political discourse to resolve political disputes, and different interpretations of political concepts envision different ideals concerning political life and organization. To study responsibility in this manner is to attend to the interplay between these three poles in both invocations of responsibility in political discourse and conceptualizations of responsibility in political theory. In addition to a methodological contribution, this advances the

substantive arguments of this study by shifting the focus of inquiry from conceptual analysis to political use. By placing the meaning of responsibility as an object of discursive and political contestation, this chapter suggests the contingency of commonsense notions of responsibility and its possibility for revision.

In Chapter Two, "Personalizing Responsibility," I put these insights to work by analyzing invocations of responsibility in twentieth- and twenty-first century American political discourse and thinking, engaging close readings of a broad archive: including political philosophy and theory, popular political writings, speeches, and policy documents. Tracing the development of now ubiquitous tropes of personal responsibility, I show how this mode of thinking spread from libertarian and conservative political discourse to dominate the discursive environment. As such, defenders of liberal social policies and the welfare state – the targets of such narratives – were forced to articulate their own politics within these terms. I further explore the tenacity of these tropes by studying their influence on political theory. I show their appropriation by liberal political philosophy, in the writings of John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin. Furthermore, in readings of Judith Butler and William Connolly, I demonstrate the difficulty of challenging this discursive hegemony, as these tropes resurface even in the thought of ardent critics of personal responsibility. Throughout these readings, I also demonstrate the two pathologies of personal responsibility – obscuring structural injustice and intensifying a politics of resentment – at work in these various discourses and texts. Finally, I turn to early twentieth-century discourses of social responsibility, which argued against the language of personal responsibility instead envisioning a capacious social and governmental responsibility in response to poverty. Doing show further emphasizes the contingency and artifice of narratives of personal responsibility; their ubiquity and dominance were not inevitable and need not remain constant.

Chapter Three, "Revaluing Responsibility," is the central pivot of this study, marking the transition from the deconstructive project to reconstructing a contending account of responsibility. In this chapter, I turn to Nietzsche's thought in explicit detail, arguing that his work is oriented towards the revaluation of responsibility: a reinterpretation that both challenges existing moralistic interpretations and animates human life in modern conditions. This chapter begins with a systematic analysis of Nietzsche's critique of moral responsibility as a constitutive element of what he calls "the moral world-order." This mode of thinking orders the world around a transcendental balance sheet wherein every instance of suffering can and should be rectified by blaming and punishing an accountable agent. The moral world-order culminates in nihilistic resentment of oneself, others, action, and of the human condition itself. In contrast, Nietzsche provides resources to reinterpret responsibility oriented around life-affirmation and human flourishing. Through close readings, paying particular attention to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I draw upon Nietzsche's images of children and pregnancy, his teaching of the eternal recurrence of the same (ERS), and his call to "remain faithful to the earth" to articulate the contours of anticipatory responsibility.

In Chapter Four, "Politicizing Responsibility," I outline the politics of anticipatory responsibility by placing Nietzsche's account in dialogue with Hans Jonas, Hannah Arendt, Iris Young, and Max Weber. Doing so pushes Nietzsche's insights beyond their immediate occasions, and generating new avenues for thinking that he himself could not foresee. In this analysis, I outline four interrelated dimensions of anticipatory responsibility. First, the temporal orientation of ERS is uniquely well-equipped to make sense of responsibility in the political world, where tenacious structures and the effects of action persist far beyond their original action. Second, anticipatory responsibility's object, the political world, renders structural injustice visible, and orients political action away from purely individualistic action towards the transformation of these structures. Third, this responsibility can only be discharged through political action that mobilizes power, generates

authority, and builds lasting institutions to engender structural change. Finally, in response to anticipatory responsibility's potentially immense burdens and temptations of power, it can only be borne in common, through democratically mobilized political communities. These four dimensions do not provide a single model that identifies and distributes responsibility, but identifies a political ethic of responsibility animated by anticipatory responsibility.

This study concludes by reconsidering the relationship between personal and anticipatory responsibility as agonistic positions: contending interpretations of responsibility that envision competing responses to political dilemmas. When considered as such, the tensions generated by their divergent political imaginaries can be seen as mutually beneficial and productive rather than antagonistic or mutually exclusive. Such generative tension requires maintaining the discursive space open for multiple contending interpretations of responsibility rather than settling conceptual or political debate. Finally, to outline the benefits and stakes of such approach, I return to the challenge of responding to global climate change. Comparing dominant trends in the literature, which implicitly rely on a conception of personal moral responsibility to anticipatory responsibility's four dimensions, I show the potentials for further theoretical reflection and political advocacy this perspective generates.

Chapter 1:
Interrogating Responsibility

I-Who is Responsible?

Responsibility is a fundamental organizing problematic in political life. The need to identify and hold agents accountable for their actions animates a variety of social, legal, and political practices. Political communities function by assigning and distributing responsibilities to their members, and the demands of justice rely on a sense of responsibility when imposing sanction or redress. The idea that individuals should be held morally, legally, and politically responsible for their actions is inscribed as a commonsense in modern political reasoning.

While philosophers have long argued that, in the words of Thomas Metzinger, "our inner experience of strong autonomy may look increasingly like what it has been all along: an appearance only,"[1] and that beliefs in freedom and responsibility are metaphysical fictions, remnants of a folk psychology to be replaced with a thoroughly naturalistic worldview,[2] the belief in individual responsibility remains, as Bruce Waller has put it, "stubborn."[3] This apparent stubbornness is only perplexing if one fails to understand personal responsibility as a political discourse. As Friedrich. A. Hayek, an ideological pioneer of the discourse of personal responsibility, describes, "If we say that a person is responsible for the consequences of an action, this is not a statement of fact or an assertion about causation." Instead, Hayek continues, "The statement that a person is responsible for what he does aims at making his action different from what they would be if he did not believe it to be true. We assign responsibility to a man, not in order to say that as he was he might have acted

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[1] Thomas Metzinger, *The Ego Tunnel : The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 129.
[2] See for example: Galen Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Studies* 75, no. 1/2 (1994); Derk Pereboom, *Living without Free Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Bruce N. Waller, *Against Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011).
[3] Waller writes: "most contemporary philosophers favor a cosmos devoid of deities and miracles; nonetheless, a similar phenomenon can be observed in contemporary philosophy. As the sciences have progressively eroded grounds for belief in moral responsibility, philosophers and folk alike have clung to moral responsibility with fierce determination." *The Stubborn System of Moral Responsibility* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 3-4.

differently, but in order to make him different."[4] The language of personal responsibility is not predicated on metaphysical truth, but political necessity; these narratives perform political labor and organize the political world in particular ways.

This chapter defends Hayek's assertion that ascriptions of responsibility make political rather than metaphysical claims, though his specific doctrine of responsibility is subjected to criticism in the subsequent chapter. Treating responsibility as a political discourse, rather than a legal, moral, or philosophical concept, makes sense of the persistence of narratives of personal responsibility despite philosophical skepticism and the complexities of politics. Failure to attend to the political dynamics underpinning ascriptions and invocations of responsibility recreate philosophical impasses. Its staying power despite philosophic critique is explained by the affective and social resources it mobilizes as a political resource. Moreover, once situated as a contestable political discourse used to justify particular political values and practices, the possibility of generating alternative accounts and conceptions of responsibility emerges.

This chapter argues that responsibility must be understood politically, as invoked in political discourse to settle political questions and order the political world that has real distributional consequences. To that end, I contend that political concepts share on three properties: their meanings are contestable and contested rather than universally shared or given; their contestable meanings are settled, or decontested, in the course of politics as decisions and action require resolving the contested meanings of political concepts and values; and their meanings have essentially imaginative qualities, as the meanings attached to core political concepts portend different accounts of political life and order. Treating responsibility in these terms not only reveals the ways that different notions of responsibility are both predicated upon and contribute to different

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[4] Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 74-75. Hayek's theorization of responsibility will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

conceptions of the good life, but also illuminates the possibilities of alternatives of forgotten,

disavowed, and displaced conceptions of responsibility to animate and motivate political action.

The argument proceeds in two sections. In Section II I articulate the three dimensions of

political concepts, drawing on the work of W.B. Gallie, William E. Connolly, Michael Freeden, and

Sheldon S. Wolin. I also place this approach in conversation with historical genealogy, ordinary

language philosophy, and political realism. Through etymological and conceptual analysis, I show in

Section III that responsibility should be viewed as such a political concept. I conclude this chapter

ultimately with a promissory note, by outlining the narrative of personal responsibility that animates

this study and whose analysis as a political concept will occupy the subsequent chapter.

II-Interrogating Political Concepts

Studying a concept politically is not equivalent to studying a political concept. This is not a

trivial semantic distinction, as I argue in this section, but demarcates a distinct mode of inquiry. I

contend that studying a concept politically requires attending to three aspects in particular. First, it

requires treating a concept or value as essentially contestable, or as one which not only has disparate

meanings, but has inherently ambiguous and even paradoxical constituent elements. Second, while

these concepts are beset by indeterminacy, politics demands that such ambiguities be settled through

a process of decontestation. This can be accomplished by placing the concept in a particular

conceptual or ideological constellation in which other concepts and values are used to fix and settle

ambiguous elements.[5] Third, political concepts are not only descriptive but are imaginative; they are

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[5] For example, the precise meaning of a concept like equality, which by itself is ambiguous as to whether it entails a perfectly equal distribution of goods or is limited to particular domains or conditions, can be settled by placing it within a liberal ideological discourse. Liberalism's commitment to individuality and liberty therefore entails that its conception of equality Alternatively, a concept can be decontested by granting one particular interpretation of the concept a transcendental status, placing it beyond contestation. Both religious declarations and rights claims, for example, perform this process. In essence, one meaning of the concept is granted a trump status that supervenes over other political considerations and cannot be violated. In Chapter 3, I will discuss Nietzsche's critique of this form of decontestation

both linked to and present a particular interpretation of political life and organization. Different interpretations of the same political concept can envision vastly different images of politics.

This approach is not limited to the traditional cannon of political concepts. One could study a political concept, such as freedom, without studying it politically; for example, one could postulate an ideal and universal theory of freedom and then derive from this concept a series of political claims. In contrast, one could study a seemingly apolitical concept, such as nature, politically by studying its diverse and conflicting conceptions throughout history, how they rely on and imagine fundamentally different social orders, and how they are asserted in political thinking and discourse as having a singular meaning such that cognitive order is maintained and normative values are ranked. If nature is conceived of as the product of a divinely established order, political disputes can be settled by appeals to natural law. In contrast, if nature is conceived of as a set of resources to be extracted, economic efficiency and optimization become means to settle disputes.[6]

I articulate the three poles of this mode of inquiry by drawing on the work of Gallie and Connolly on essentially contested concepts, Freeden's account of conceptual morphology and political thinking, and Wolin's analysis of the imaginative component of political thought. I then turn to brief comparisons with Quentin Skinner's genealogical approach and Hanna Pitkin's analysis of ordinary language, as well as the broader consequences of this approach for political theory.

A-Essentially Contested Concepts

W. B. Gallie refers to "essentially contested concepts" as "concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users."[7] He further outlines the following conditions: the concept must be appraisive; it must be logically complex; it

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[6] For a detailed study of the different political imaginaries projected by different discourses about "nature," see: Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).
[7] W. B. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (1955): 169.

must refer to and logically admit various contributions of their constituent features; it must permit modification in changing circumstances; and it must have contesting parties adhering to different uses, yet still recognize the need to defend their particular use of the concept against others.[8] Conceptual clarification cannot adequately settle disputes over meaning, as interpretive conflict is driven by inherently ambiguous and potentially paradoxical meanings at the core of the concept. Therefore, it is impossible, as John N. Gray stresses, to give an essentialist or value-neutral account of such a concept. Instead, essentially contested concepts require "an accurate knowledge of the sociological and historical contexts, and recurrent situations and systems of practices, in which the concept is used."[9] Analysis should not begin, therefore, with axiomatic definitions, which obscure the very political nature of these concepts.

This has political and not only methodological implications. As Connolly argues, "politics is the mode in which the contest [between essentially contested concepts] is expressed. Politics involves the clash that emerges when appraisive concepts are shared widely but imperfectly, when mutual understanding and interpretation is possible but in a partial and limited way, when reasoned argument and coercive pressure commingle precariously in the endless process of resolving issues."[10] Political claim-making therefore requires a shared vocabulary, but political debates are not simply over policy-making but over how to interpret and order this imperfectly shared vocabulary. These

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[8] *Ibid.*, 171-172.

[9] John N. Gray, "On the Contestability of Social and Political Concepts," *Political Theory* 5, no. 3 (1977): 336. Gray concludes, however, that this account of essentially contested concepts can risk skepticism and relativism, as such concepts necessarily presuppose, even if implicitly, claims about other substantive philosophical issues such as metaphysics or philosophy of mind, which are themselves contestable (356). In contrast, Robert Grafstein advances a compelling argument that conceptual diversity and contestability is not caused by indeterminacy about reality, but political debate over a common ground, allowing him to incorporate conceptual contestation within a realist metaphysical position. Robert Grafstein, "A Realist Foundation for Essentially Contested Political Concepts," *The Western Political Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1988). As will become clear, I maintain that political concepts do necessarily make ontological claims, as claims about how the political world should be structured necessarily rely upon claims about what the world is. However, rather than cause for alarm, I contend that such claims are constitutive of political thought and action and that political theorists would be remise to exempt them from political analysis.

[10] William E. Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse*, 2 ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 230.

debates, furthermore, are unlikely to be settled once and for all, because they are fundamentally

"debates over the form of the good life" (230).[11] Philosophical clarification is unlikely to settle such

debates, as contestation over the good life draws sustenance from different normative and

metaphysical commitments.[12] The divergent metaphysical commitments that animate different

interpretations of an imperfectly shared political vocabulary, help explains intractable political

disagreements. For example, the contending interpretations of human life, in addition to autonomy

and privacy, which animate debates over abortion necessarily exclude each other and are unlikely to

be resolved through philosophical analysis.

      This raises important questions on how essentially contestable concepts should be identified.

To limit this classification to those concepts currently being actively contested, risks naturalizing

oppressive or exclusionary political values. The lack of active contestation should not be interpreted

as universal interpretive agreement, as doing so places such concepts beyond political contestation

and debate. J. S. Mill's warnings about the tyranny of the majority – that "the majority, being

satisfied with the ways of mankind as they now are (for it is they who make them what they are),

cannot comprehend why those ways should not be good enough for everybody"[13] – is an instructive

reminder of the power of habit and custom to impose particular interpretations of the good life and

silence opposition.

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[11] See also: Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 41-43; *Justice Is Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 79-80.

[12] Connolly, *Terms of Political Discourse*, 20. In later writings Connolly argues that political theory should involve "ontopolitical interpretation," because "every political interpretation invokes a set of fundaments about necessities and possibilities of human being, about, for instance, the forms into which humans may be composed and the possible relations humans can establish with nature." William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 1. Similarly, Jane Bennett argues that political theorists should study "onto-stories" or "ontological imaginaries:" "the picture[s] of the basic character of nature/life/existence—that informs a theory's more specifically political set of claims, criticisms, and analyses. Such onto-stories are, in contrast to traditional metaphysics, presented as speculative and contestable, though also as a valuable and perhaps indispensable part of thinking." Jane Bennett, "In Parliament with Things," in *Radical Democracy: Between Abundance and Lack*, ed. Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 147, n.7.

[13] John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," in *On Liberty with the Subjection of Women and Chapters on Socialism*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1859] 1989), 57.

Therefore, it is important to assert that political concepts are essentially contestable, if not always contested, precisely because they linked to broader metaphysical and normative commitments that are not necessarily universally shared. Following Connolly, calling political concepts essentially contestable,

> calls attention to the internal connection between conceptual debates and debates over the form of the good life, to the reasonable grounds we now have to believe that rational space for such contestation will persist into the future, to the value of keeping such contests alive even in settings where a determinate orientation to action is required, and to the incumbent task for those who accept the first three themes to expose conceptual closure where it has been imposed artificially.[14]

To claim that political concepts are essentially contestable does not limit political inquiry to the study of currently debated, but should spur inquiry into how and why this contestability is disavowed.

One strategy of resisting the contestability of political values and concepts is to deny that the contested interpretations and uses of the concept are all invoking the same concept. Instead, this line of reasoning continues, the mistake lies in assuming that partisans are speaking about the same concept, when they are in fact misattributing different concepts to the same word or utterance. For example, debates about equality between those who favor equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome may in fact be not about equality but two different concepts. The substantive differences between these two interpretations of equality may suggest that it is theoretically and methodologically useful to distinguish them as two distinct concepts. This response, however, only forestalls the question of contestation, rather than resolving it. It does not deny that political partisans invoke the same concept with two different meanings or uses. Furthermore, this response risks becoming detached from the actual invocations and uses of a political concept. While the conceptual distinction may be useful in abstraction, that political actors do not view these as distinct concepts, but each offer their own, and in their eyes "correct," interpretation of the same concept.

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[14] Connolly, *Terms of Political Discourse*, 230-231.

Therefore, I find it useful to follow Freeden's supplement to the essential contestability thesis. Freeden suggests that political concepts have both "ineliminable features and quasi-contingent features."[15] The ineliminable features of a concept do not deny its essential contestability, but refer to the features that adhere to all known uses of the concept. However, the meaning of the concept cannot be reduced to these core features, as quasi-contingent features clarify ambiguities in the core of the concept.[16] This modification explains why partisans would invoke the same concept, despite substantively different interpretations. The core features of the concept can be held in common but remain indeterminate without clarification of its quasi-contingent features.

Alternatively, essential contestability could be denied by drawing a distinction between a political concept and a particular conception of that concept. This Rawlsian distinction insist that disagreements are not over the concept itself, but over different conceptions, all of whom hold certain core elements of the concept in common.[17] Rainer Forts draws on this distinction in his discussion of toleration. The concept itself is "too empty and indeterminate" to specify the necessary limits and criteria, and is therefore "normatively dependent" on another concept, justice, to gain "certain substance, contents and limits" and "a kind of higher-order impartiality that at the same time transcends the realm of the values and conceptions of the good that are disputed in a pluralistic society."[18] In this case, contestation is not essential to the concept, but is a result of misidentifying the concept to which it is normatively dependent. The goal of political analysis for

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[15] Michael Freeden, "Political Concepts and Ideological Morphology," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (1994): 146.

[16] *Ibid.,* 147. Therefore, "the specificity of political concepts derives from the combination of two factors: the presence of an ineliminable component, albeit an undifferentiated form rather than hard and substantive; and a non-random, even if widely variable, collection of additional components that are locked in to that vacuous 'de act' core in a limited number of recognizable patterns' (149). In later work, Freeden suggests that "effective contestability" should replace "essential contestability" to suggest that "contestability is not an essential property of the concept but a property of political discourse. Its contestability is effectively ineliminable in reference to the thought-practice we are identifying." "Editorial: Essential Contestability and Effective Contestability," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 1 (2004): 5.

[17] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 5.

[18] Rainer Forst, "Tolerance as a Virtue of Justice," *Philosophical Explorations* 4, no. 3 (2001): 196.

Rawls is to reconstruct the conception that "free and equal moral persons themselves agree upon, if they were fairly represented solely as such persons and thought of themselves as citizens living a complete life in an on-going society."[19] For Forst, the goal is to identify the normative ground, which provides the conditions of possibility for a particular conception of a political value. This identification settles the meaning of the contested concept by pointing to a shared or normatively binding value.

This approach poses two problems, however. Methodologically, settling this dispute is practically impossible. By postulating a higher-order normative value in which there is impartial agreement can create an infinite regress: any new conflicting claim or ambiguity simply points towards an even higher-order normative ideal. This regress could only be halted by postulating some core political value beyond contestation, detached from the real world of discursive contestation. Politically, denying the deep value conflict over conceptions of human persons, freedom, equality, responsibility, and justice treats political conflict as a cognitive error to be eliminated. This move reflects a desire to solve political disputes once and for all through conceptual analysis and is a strategy of depoliticization. By appealing to, in Forst's words, "a freestanding and impartial normative basis,"[20] scholars risk, in the words of Charles W. Mills, abstracting "away from realities crucial to our comprehension of the actual workings of injustice in human interactions and social institutions."[21] Such abstraction both rationalizes status quo and renders opaque the experiences of marginalization and oppression engendered by actually existing differences, limitations, and circumstances of 'non-ideal' agents.[22]

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[19] John Rawls, "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory," *The Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 9 (1980): 517.

[20] Forst, "Tolerance as a Virtue of Justice," 196.

[21] Charles W. Mills, ""Ideal Theory" as Ideology," *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 170.

[22] For example, an ideal theory of responsibility based on an idealized account of accountability elevates as a normative ideal a particular conception of self including a relative stability in self-identity as well as the ability to take ownership of and answer for oneself and one's deeds. This, even if only inadvertently, risks relegating those with cognitive functions that complicate this self-conception as normatively deficient. In addition, by casting the moral questions in terms of

Therefore, there are both methodological and political reasons for upholding the essential contestability thesis. Methodologically, it treats concepts as matters of actual political dispute rather than conceptual ambiguity, better facilitating the study of the political origins and consequences of political values and concepts, such as responsibility. Politically, it refuses to settle and depoliticize these debates, leaving open the possibility of future conceptual revision.

B- Political Thinking and Decontested Concepts

It is a mischaracterization to treat politics as purely a realm of ambiguity and contestation, as it requires making decisions and taking actions that prioritize one interest, group, or value over another. As Freeden states: "while the very nature of political concepts lies in their essential contestability, the very nature of the political process is to arrive at binding decisions that determine the priority of one course of action over another."[23] While political concepts lack settled and universally shared meanings, the practice of politics itself is to settle these disputes through decision, action, or declaration. Freeden, distinguishes politics as a form of thinking and practice, rather than a sphere of activity. "The underlying rationale of politics," for Freeden, "is the quest for finality and decisiveness in the affairs of groups, ends that are permanently frustrated by the slippery and inconclusive circumstances in which that quest occurs."[24] Politics, therefore, is torn between these two aspects. On the one hand, it is driven by a drive to finality: to settle questions, to determine actions, to rank values, or distribute resources. On the other hand, because politics is articulated through essentially contestable concepts, such finality is often frustrated and is fleetingly temporary at best.

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idealized, and therefore featureless, agents, moral theory is itself unable to see the challenges faced by such persons even if the normative ideal is accepted.

[23] Freeden, "Political Concepts and Conceptual Morphology," 156.

[24] Michael Freeden, *The Political Theory of Political Thinking: The Anatomy of a Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22.

When a political concept or value is invoked, it is not invoked as contestable or ambiguous. Rather, invocations always attempt "to control equivocal and contingent meanings by holding [them] constant," in the absence of logical or impartial rules that determine the precise meaning and interpretation of the value (23). Political actors necessarily invoke concepts such as responsibility, freedom, or justice to settle political questions, and in doing so present a particular decontestation, or settled interpretation, of the concept as authoritative. Though partisans offer differing interpretations of justice when debating welfare policy, each views them as politically binding. As Freeden insists, "decisions *must* be taken," and the essential contestability of political values and concepts must be settled, even if provisionally, so that an action can proceed (73).

Decontestation can occur in two primary ways. As suggested earlier, one can settle the meaning of a contested concept by appealing to a transcendental standard beyond contestation, whether as a founding principle, a rights claim, or a religious doctrine. These constitute an effective trumping mechanism by which a dispute is settled by invoking an unquestionable authority. Such a strategy, relies, however, on shared contexts and background assumptions. As debates over controversial social issues such as abortion and marriage equality demonstrate, these authorities are not universally shared by all partisans.

Freeden also argues that contestability can be settled by placing the concept within an ideological discourse consisting of several interrelated concepts and values. Instead of treating ideologies as fictions, Freeden argues that they "are the complex constructs through which specific meanings, out of a potentially unlimited and essentially contestable universe of meanings, are imparted to the wide range of political concepts they inevitably employ."[25] Ideologies settle the meaning of a contestable concept, by providing a "semantic field," in which the quasi-contingent

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[25] *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 54.

features are settled by their relationship with other concepts in the ideological discourse (67). For

example, liberalism settles the meaning of liberty by placing it in a discursive context adjacent to

concepts such as individualism, rationality, progress, and limited government, which together

decontest liberty as non-constraint or self-determination (146-147). Therefore, studying political

concepts requires studying the particular discursive and ideological environments they occupy, rather

than the concept in isolation. Failing to do so risks obscuring the mechanisms by which contested

meanings are settled.[26]

Furthermore, this quest for finality is not limited to realm of policy making or

institutionalized decision-making. Instead, it "is activated when we constantly make decisions, act

under orders we justify or resist, imagine a better life for ourselves and the groups to which we are

attached, choose what is more important or urgent when we have to attend to a number of

concerns, find ways of adjudicating among competing claims on our principles or emotions, and

seek support for our actions and the identities we adopt."[27] To think or act politically is to invoke a

particular interpretation of a political value to make a claim about how the world is or should be,

thereby having distributional consequences, whether of goods, power, or significance. The meanings

of political concepts are simultaneously settled by these invocations and in turn settle political

disputes and determine affairs for groups of individuals.

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[26] Ian Shapiro makes a similar argument in rejecting what he calls "gross concepts" which obscure essentially relational claims "involving agents, actions, legitimacy, and ends" and simply assert values such as liberty, equality, or justice as self-evident political ends to be pursued. Ian Shapiro, "Gross Concepts in Political Argument," *Political Theory* 17, no. 1 (1989).

[27] Freeden, *Political Theory of Political Thinking*, 33-34. Freeden explicates 6 specific instances of political thinking from demarcating 6 particular categories of politics. Political thinking: (a) "affirms or aspires to the exercise of ultimate and antecedent superior systemic control and jurisdiction in social affairs;" (b) ranks "social aims, demands, processes, and structures;" (c) 'accepts, justifies, criticizes, or rejects collective entities;" (d) arranges conceptual and argumentative group behavior; (e) "determines policy […] and, more ambitiously, projects collective visions;" (f) engages in "persuasion, rhetoric, emotion, or menace" both verbally or non-verbally aimed at exercising power over the previous 5 categories (35).

This conception of political thinking and action challenges the view, exemplified by Jacques Rancière that politics is constituted by a logic of rupture or openness. For Rancière "politics is a specific rupture in the logic of *archè*" that "also requires a rupture in the idea that there are dispositions 'proper' to such classification."[28] Freeden treats this argument by definition as a "stipulative sleight of hand," that obscures the immense political work required to build and sustain fragile political orders.[29] While political thinking can take the form of a challenge to or rejection of existing distributions of power, not all political actions have this spectacular quality. Political decisions impose order as much as they challenge it; failing to attend to this risks both theoretical error and political impotence.[30]

To study responsibility through the lens of political thinking, therefore, is to study how invocations of responsibility are used to settle political questions, to distribute value and significance, and guide the future actions of a group. This could take either the form of historical inquiry—how responsibility has functioned in the political thinking of the past, and shaped political decisions and institutions that affect current political condition—or a contemporary study—how is responsibility currently used in political thinking and what political ends does it serve. Freeden's object of inquiry consists of "real life" examples of political thinking rather than those in the history of political thought, suggesting rigorous discourse analysis of speeches, pamphlets, and other examples of political thinking. However, there is no inherent reason why Freeden's analysis of political thinking

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[28] Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," *Theory & Event* 5, no. 3 (2001).

[29] Freeden, *Political Theory of Political Thinking*, 64.

[30] However my account of political inquiry resonates with another aspect of Rancière's account of politics: the distribution of the sensible: the idea that "politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time." Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 13. This is analogous to Freeden's argument that political thinking distributes significance and ranks values. Political settlements determine what can be discussed and who can speak. For this reason, it is necessary to insist that these are political settlements, not divisions and distinctions given a priori in any concept, and hence contestable.

must be restricted to such empirical study.[31] While interested in the political work being performed

by discourses of responsibility, my project also expands this mode of inquiry to different political

theories of responsibility: how do different theories of responsibility settle political questions

differently and what political worlds do such settlements imagine? Hence, a third pole animates my

approach.

C-Political Theory and the Imagination

Invocations of political concepts do more than settle specific political disputes; they also

presuppose and project a particular vision of political order. These projections extend beyond the

particular political question at hand and imply a broad image of how the political world should be

ordered. These visions – and their concomitant metaphysical claims concerning human persons, the

place of humanity in nature, and the capacities of human reason – generate much of the

contestation, as partisans invoke the concept with different background and ontological

assumptions. For this reason, it is necessary for political analysis to attend to these imaginative

qualities of political concepts and values in addition to tracing the particular interpretations and

settlements of meaning.

This imaginative quality of political thinking is valuably articulated by Wolin, who describes

political theory as a form of seeing that imagines new social and political orders.[32] According to

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[31] Freeden himself, while distinguishing the study of political thinking from normative political philosophy and the history of political of political thought, encourages "different combinations of those approaches, depending on the primary target of our research," because separating these modes of inquiry comes at "some cost to an overall understanding of political thinking." Michael Freeden, "Thinking Politically and Thinking About Politics: Language, Interpretation, and Ideology," in *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*, ed. David Leopold and Marc Stears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 214.

[32] Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, Expanded Edition ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 20. Both Connolly and Freeden also take up questions of vision and imagination in their work as well. In later work, Connolly describes the importance of the interplay between the "political theorist" and "the seer," or the need to both attend to "common sense during periods of relative stability" while also "appreciating or sensing how the terms of common sense can suffocate otherwise admirable possibilities." William E. Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 175. Connolly understands an imaginative disposition as a necessary quality for political theorists, allowing them to "*recoil* back upon such ideas and judgments after they emerge, testing, revising, and refining them in a variety of ways" (165). Freeden engages the

Wolin, a theory serves as a "sum of judgments, shaped by the theorist's notion of what matters, and embodying a series of discriminations about where one province begins and another leaves off."[33] A political theory should not be understood as a method of organizing and synthesizing data, but is informed by tacit knowledge including "cultural resources […] itemized as metaphysics, faith, [and] historical sensibility" (1074).[34] Governed by the logic of appropriateness, a political theory is an attempt to make sense of the political world as a whole, and thereby necessarily projects and imagines the political world in a particular way.

Invocations of political concepts, therefore, imagine a social and political world inaugurated by the particular political decision being made and governed by the particular interpretation of political values offered. This imaginative projection ranks values, distributes significances, and articulates a collective end to guide future decision-making and action. As such, the study of political concepts must attend to these qualities, interpreting the world imagined by political discourse.

The imaginative quality of political thinking also suggests the importance of not only interpreting and evaluating the political words envisioned by contending interpretations and uses of political values and concepts, but also charting alternative meanings and visions of politics that have been forgotten, disavowed, left behind, or represent paths not taken. For Wolin, the history of political thought is a repository of different attempts to make sense of the complexity of political life, which can open "new theoretical vistas." These "strange and therefore provocative" ways of looking at the world both generate a sense of contingency in dominant political values (1077), and

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imagination less as a sensibility of political theory, than as a function of political thinking: political thinking must domesticate the uncertainty of the future by projecting a vision of how political life is to be ordered. Freeden, *Political Theory of Political Thinking*, 236-240. As such, "imagination is by no means reduced to the refined minds of the great political philosophers; it is located in each and every person who thinks politically" (240). While this subsection focuses on Wolin's classic account of political imagination, Connolly's and Freeden's insights contribute both to my own sensibilities as a political theorist and to my analysis of both popular political discourse and historical political thought.

[33] Sheldon S. Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation," *The American Political Science Review* 63, no. 4 (1969): 1076.

[34] Compare Wolin's account of tacit knowledge to Connolly's ontopolitical interpretation or Bennett's ontological imaginaries: Chapter 1, n. 12.

also provide an archive of theorists who "inaugurate a new way of looking at the world, which includes a new set of concepts, as well as new cognitive *and* normative standards" (1078). The work of political analysis, therefore, requires explorations of alternative interpretations of political concepts that challenge dominant interpretations and envision divergent political worlds.

While this approach suggests that the history of political thought can provide valuable resources for approaching contemporary politics, there is a real concern that Wolin's emphasis on the singular importance of the "epic" tradition in political theory can insulate political theory from the political world itself.[35] For this reason, it is valuable to place this contribution in the broader context of political analysis I have been articulating. While the study of how contested political concepts become settled in political discourse suggests a rigorous analysis of "real world" political discourse, Wolin's emphasis on the imagination suggests that the proper domain of inquiry are the texts in the history of political thought that provide the most robust visions of politics. Each pole represents a valuable counterweight to the other, suggesting the importance moving back and forth from empirical political discourse and the history of political thought. Such a project, in Freeden's words, both generates "clusters of ideas that could refashion our worlds" and teases "out the manifold potentials contained in those worlds."[36] It subjects political discourse to the same analysis reserved for the canon of political theory, explicating the implicit political worlds envisioned by different interpretations of political values. Simultaneously, it studies political theory as particular discursive settlements of essentially contested political concepts, some of which have the possibility to challenge or reframe pressing political questions.

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[35] See: Lon Troyer, "Political Theory as a Provocation: An Ethos of Political Theory," in *Vocations of Political Theory*, ed. Jason A. Frank and John Tambornino (Mineapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[36] Freeden, *Political Theory of Political Thinking*, 13. Freeden is quite clear that while his focus is developing a theory of political thinking that encompasses both normative political theory and philosophy but also the quotidian acts of political thinking. Importantly, however, Freeden refuses to privilege academic political thinking as exempt from the analysis that he wishes to perform on everyday political thinking, and insists on the necessity that normative political theories themselves be subject to rigorous analysis as manifestations of political thinking (15).

D- Genealogy and Ordinary Language Analysis

This account of political concepts shares several commonalities with two other modes of inquiry in political theory: a Skinnerian approach which traces the emergence of particular uses of political concepts as responses to particular historical and political questions as well as Hanna Pitkin's Wittgensteinian approach that seeks to overcome "conceptual puzzlement" by studying actual uses of a concept in ordinary language. While I draw insights from these interventions, I ultimately distinguish my position from both.

Skinner's approach requires not only contextualizing texts, but understanding their illocutionary force by studying the linguistic environment in which the text intervenes. [37] Rather than treating political theoretical texts as providing timeless answers to perennial political questions, the goal of inquiry is to understand "what [a text's] author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance" (49). Such study reveals "the essential variety of viable moral assumptions and political commitments," but also implies that when approaching contemporary politics, "we must learn to do our own thinking for ourselves" (52).

While this intervention provides a robustly political account of language, texts, and conceptual change, it is a mistake to limit the value of the history of ideas to the denaturalization of inherited concepts. Doing so robs political theorists of any ability to draw on the rich archive of political texts to engage in contemporary political questions. [38] Conceptual relativism provides no normative justification for why one conception of responsibility should be preferred over the other;

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[37] Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 46-47. Skinner argues that the importance of context is important, but can lead to methodological errors by viewing meaning as entirely determined by context (44-46). Drawing on Austin's speech act theory, Skinner argues that "what must still be grasped for any given statement is *how* what was said was meant, and thus what *relations* there may have been between various different statements even within the same general context" (47, original emphasis).

[38] See: David Paul Mandell, "The History of Political Thought as a 'Vocation:' A Pragmatist Defense," in *Vocations of Political Theory*, ed. Jason A. Frank and John Tambornino (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 124.

such reasoning must, with Skinner, be done for ourselves. Yet, historical texts provide, if only

anachronistically, "a storehouse of materials for such conceptual *bricolage*—as a collection of ideas,

images and possibilities."[39] Such readings are not ahistorical attempts to locate *the* answer in a

historical text, but to draw on these images and provocations to explore alternative ways to

understand the political world. The goal must be to understand these alternative images as political

claims themselves, but also can motivate and orient contemporary political thinking, not provide

ready-made solutions.

Pitkin's approach, drawing on Wittgenstein and ordinary language philosophy, provides

another complementary approach. Here, studying the ways in which words are used in ordinary

language can overcome the "conceptual puzzlement" that arise over abstract philosophical analysis.[40]

Because concepts "are compounds, assembled out of the variety of cases in which they are

characteristically used," a philosophical approach that prioritizes the definition of the concept as an

abstract universal will necessarily lead to confusion when attempting to make sense of existing

practices involving the concept (70).[41] Methodologically, this requires engaging in a close analysis of

the particular grammars, language games, and forms of life from which a particular word – or a

particular use of a concept – gains meaning and is actively deployed in discourse. The goal of such

inquiry is to resolve our conceptual puzzlement by gaining a "perspicuous overview of the

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[39] Margaret Leslie, "In Defense of Anachronism," *Political Studies* 18, no. 4 (1970): 443. As Leslie continues, "We may not be able to go to the past with questionnaires and find tabulated answers; but we can nevertheless learn from the past by means of a dialogue which can simultaneously enrich our own thought and our historical understanding" (447). Mandell makes a similar point, arguing for a pragmatist use of the history of political thought in coalition building: "The dissolution of old ideological coalitions and the formation of new ones is neither automatic nor spontaneous; it requires active critical work—the purging of former associates, the reforging of ties with old comrades, and the inclusion of new and formerly unimaginable allies." Mandell, "History of Political Thought as a 'Vocation,'" 136.

[40] Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice: On the Significance of Ludwig Wittgenstein for Social and Political Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 6-7.

[41] Pitkin continues: "the various cases out of which the meaning of a word is compounded need not be mutually consistent; they may–perhaps must–have contradictory implications. These inconsistent or contradictory implications are what give rise to conceptual puzzlement and paradox" (85).

grammar" of a concept, which dissolves the apparent tension between the philosophical account of the concept and its use in practical discourse.[42]

While there is much to be gained from this approach, I part ways in two respects. First, while Pitkin acknowledges that meaning and life-worlds exhibit "recurring patterns, regularities, characteristic ways of doing and being, of feeling and acting, of speaking and interacting" (132), her approach downplays the ways in which settling the meaning of a word is a political action itself. Settlements are not mere occurrences in regular patterns, but require specific political actions and interventions that interpret and articulate the meaning of the concept in a particular discursive context. Second, this Wittgensteinian approach risks political quietism, or limiting political thought to charting of particular uses in ordinary language in the recurring and intractable controversies of politics. In contrast, the approach outlined herein adds emphasizes less philosophic contemplation and more the "prophet's demanding vision of alternatives within reach" that Pitkin herself defines as constitutive of the political theorist and can help orient political thought and action (314).

E- Political Realism and Real Politics

While this study does not provide an exhaustive definition of "politics," this approach to political theory relies on an implicit conception of politics. It is a mistake to treat politics as a particular domain or arena of human behavior distinct from others. Instead, "political" describes a certain form of thought, action, or practice. To say that an action, behavior, practice, thought, utterance, or structure is political is to say that it makes a contestable claim as to how collectives of humans are or should be organized. This necessarily implicates power relationships, distribution of goods, and future action coordination, but is irreducible to any one of these. Politics, in this conception, is best described as a language game of claim-making about how the world is or should

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[42] *Ibid.,* 117.

be structured, where claim-making need not be understood as explicit utterances or speech-acts. As such, political actions, practices, and thoughts both presuppose and project broader metaphysical and moral commitments, including beliefs about human nature, the relationship between humans and non-human nature, the qualities of normative claims, or the structure of human rationality. Furthermore, while political claims are articulated through political concepts, ideologies, and other discourses, they are also made in an environment structured by differential power-relationships. As such, political claims are not only about how power should be used and distributed, but are also shaped by relations of power. It should be noted, however, that this account of "political" is subject to its own terms, and is therefore itself necessarily political, and therefore contestable.

This conception of politics is broadly consistent with what has been called a "realist" position. I take realism to be offering an account of politics as: 1) irreducible to moral or ethical absolutes, given disagreement over fundamental ontological and moral claims; 2) involving relationships, production, distribution, and use of power as bound up in political, economic, and social structures and institutions; and 3) recognizing the constraints of power, history, and the actions of others, which create disconnects between outcome and intentions as well as limitations on the possibilities for radical political transformation.[43] The foregoing account of political concepts locates them squarely into this account of politics: they simultaneously are structured by the political disagreements and relationships of power while in turn structuring the contours of future political claims and action. In later chapters, I also invoke realism to describe Nietzsche's own work. Its insistence on the centrality of power, the tenacity of social values and practices, and the

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[43] For good summaries of "realist" positions in contemporary political theory see: Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Bernard Williams, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). For a discussion of the promise and limitations of realist thought see: William A. Galston, "Realism in Political Theory," *European Journal of Political Theory* 9, no. 4 (2010).

incommensurability between the world as it is and idealistic moral theories all complement and build on this conception of politics.[44]

My account of political concepts builds on theories of political realism with a more sophisticated account of political thought and language. In this view, different modes of thinking and understanding the world are necessary components of political action, providing a necessary rejoinder to the realist prioritizing of action over "mere beliefs and propositions."[45] A realist approach to politics must take seriously the ways different discourses organize the world that political actors inhabit, are therefore not only enabling and constraining conditions on action and justification but are themselves forms of performative thought- and speech-acts that intervene and sustain political worlds.[46]

This conception of politics should not imply either that political theory cannot make normative evaluations between different interpretations of political concepts or must acquiesce to the existing distribution of power or the erasure of normative distinctions, but instead suggests the need to theorize anticipatory responsibility as a "political ethic." A political ethic describes the manner of conduct and normative standards of evaluation particular to political life. Rather than articulating absolute moral standards or a private code of conduct, a political ethic encapsulates the normative commitments of political actors as located a particular historical moment, involved

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[44] Both Geuss and Williams draw on Nietzsche's thought to develop their own conceptions of realism, especially in his critique of morality and attention to the role of power in history. Paul E. Kirkland offers a compelling reading of Nietzsche as a "tragic realist" who views politics through a tragic lens of attempting to pursue grand values but ultimately failing. Paul E Kirkland, "Nietzsche's Tragic Realism," *The Review of Politics* 72, no. 1 (2010).

[45] Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, 11.

[46] Freeden himself attempts to distinguish his account as an "interpretative realism" as distinct from the more common "prescriptive realisms." See Michael Freeden, "Editorial: Interpretative Realism and Prescriptive Realism," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 17, no. 1 (2012). While I draw significant insights from Freeden's work, my own project blurs the line he draws between interpretative and prescriptive realisms. Insofar as I study the political labor performed by discourse of responsibility, the project is interpretative; insofar as I advance a political ethic of responsibility, in this chapter in particular, the project is more prescriptive. While a useful analytic category, political theory should not be pigeonholed on either side of this line, but should itself draw sustenance from both projects. I take up these questions again in the conclusion.

necessarily with the lives of others, and responding to specific political dilemmas.[47] A political ethic of responsibility describes how agents should respond to the political world, understood as saturated in power. Anticipatory responsibility offers one such political ethic, detailing a set of orienting questions, dispositions, and practices for responding to the political world.

Tying together these threads, political concepts or values are simultaneously contestable and decontested, while also simultaneously presuppose and project a broader vision of how the political world is and should be. They both rely on a set of tacit metaphysical and normative assumptions, and are thereby essentially contestable. Yet, every use of a political concept necessarily imposes a settled meaning, prioritizing one interpretation of the concept over others. Failure to attend to this interplay risks displacing politics by either indefinitely forestalling political decisions and the risks that they entail or denying the existing of contending visions of political order.[48] Political concepts, therefore, should not be studied through detached conceptual analysis or even historical tracing. Instead, they should be studied as they are invoked, by both political actors and political theorists, to settle political disputes and questions, and imagine different possibilities for the political world.

This analysis also looks forward to my interpretation of Nietzsche in Chapter 3. His oft-quoted assertions that "facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations" (*WP*: 481)[49] and that "*there are no moral facts whatever* […] Morality is only an interpretation of certain phenomena" (*TI*:

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[47] Or as Vázquez-Arroyo describes it: "a political ethic attends to the ethical dimensions of political life. Its aspirations are ethical, even if the goal is not to craft an Ethics, but rather to think about the ethical dimensions of collective life. By and large, the overarching concerns of a political ethic are best defined as an attempt to re-cognize and theorize the diremption of ethical and political imperatives in political action. Vázquez-Arroyo, *Political Responsibility*, XIII.

[48] Bonnie Honig expresses this idea writing: "Politics consists of practices of settlement *and* unsettlement, of disruption *and* administration, of extraordinary events or foundings *and* mundane maintenance." Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 205. Freeden use strikingly similar language writing that politics "is not just about power, or antagonism, or conciliation, or decisions, or oppression, or enablement, or ruptures, or solidarity, or the public realm, though it is about all of those as well. It is about a series of distinct, fundamental, and crucial collective practices, including the thought-practices that accompany, foreshadow, and trail material and physical collective actions." *Political Theory of Political Thinking*, 2.

[49] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, [1901] 1968). Citations are noted in the text as *WP* and refer to the aphorism.

"Improvers," 1)[50] both suggest an immediate affinity between Nietzsche's own approach and the one outlined here. Nietzsche's analysis cuts even deeper, however, as his project does not merely trace the contending interpretations of political concepts, but studies these different interpretations as reflecting different affective drives within societies. As the passage from *Twilight of the Idols* continues, "morality is merely a sign-language, merely symptomatology: one must already know *what it is* about to derive profit from it."[51] To truly understand how political concepts are decontested requires understanding them as laden with affect; political settlements are not made by reasoned argumentation alone but by emotional appeals to strong psychological drives.

III-Responsibility as a Political Concept

Is responsibility such a concept? Rather than asserting so axiomatically, I undertake a brief conceptual and etymological analysis of the concept of responsibility. Doing so reveals not only the diversity of meanings, interpretations, and uses of responsibility, but also how these meanings emerge from particular political contexts. This analysis suggests that responsibility can be valuably studied through this framework. A detailed analysis of a particular interpretation of responsibility – that of personal moral responsibility – awaits Chapter 2.

That responsibility has a variety of meanings, uses, and implications in different contexts is clear from even a cursory investigation. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, responsibility has four primary meanings: a capability of fulfilling an obligation; a fact of being liable, accountable, or under an obligation; a duty to perform certain tasks; and the object of such a liability or obligation.[52]

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[50] "Twilight of the Idols," in *Twilight of the Idols and the Antichrist* (New York: Penguin Books, [1889] 2003). Citations are noted as *TI* in the text, and refer to section title and number. Consider also a notebook entry: *My chief proposition: there are no moral phenomena, there is only a moral interpretation of these phenomena. This interpretation itself is of extra-moral origin*" (*WP*: 258).
[51] Or, as he writes in a notebook entry: "moral evaluation is an *exegesis*, a way of interpreting. The exegesis itself is a symptom of certain physiological conditions, likewise of a particular spiritual level of prevalent judgments: Who interprets? – Our affects" (*WP*: 254).
[52] "1. Capability of fulfilling an obligation or duty; the quality of being reliable or trustworthy. 2a. the state or fact of being accountable; liability, accountability for something. 2b. the state or fact of being in charge of or of having a duty towards a person or thing; obligation. 2c. the ability to pay a debt or contract. 3a. with of. The fact of having a duty to do

Analogously, J. Ronald Pennock has distilled two essential facets of responsibility that bind these

diverse meanings together: "(a) accountability and (b) the rational and moral exercise of

discretionary power (or the capacity or disposition for such exercise)."[53] The first encompasses the

ideas of accountability, liability, and obligation. These can be generally classified as answerability;

one who is responsible must answer for some deed, duty, obligation, or debt. The second aspect

refers to a capability of an agent to exercise one's powers, whatever they may be, in a manner that

can be rationally and morally explicable. This is the sense used when one describes another as acting

responsibly or irresponsibly. For Pennock, the "core meaning" of the term itself is split between a

description of a capacity or status and a description of a manner of behavior.

This first sense of responsibility – that of answerability – contains significant ambiguities.

Interpreting accountability as liability or imputability appears to be straightforward, as Iris M. Young

summarizes: "one assigns responsibility to a particular agent (or agents) whose actions can be shown

to be casually connected to the circumstances for which responsibility is sought."[54] However, this

can be expanded, for example in the case of strict liability, where one can be held liable for

unintentional damages, which allows agents to be held causally responsible in the absence of

intention.[55] Liability can also be expanded to encompass corporate bodies through theories of

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something; (also) an instance of this. 3b. a burden, task, or assignment for which one is responsible. 3c. a moral obligation to behave correctly towards or in respect of a person or thing. 3d. a person for whom one is responsible. 4. A person to whom one is responsible; a person in authority." "Responsibility, N," in *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).Similarly, the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* offers this definition: "Socially, peoples' responsibilities are those things for which they are accountable; failure to discharge a responsibility renders one liable to some censure or penalty. A job, or profession, or social role will be partly defined in terms of the responsibilities it involves. The extent of responsibility not just for oneself but for others is a central topic for political and ethical theory ('Am I my brother's keeper?'). Understanding the nature of our causal responsibility for our own thoughts, natures, and actions is the main problem in any theory of action." Simon Blackburn, *Responsibility*, The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[53] J. Roland Pennock, "The Problem of Responsibility," in *Responsibility*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960), 13. See also, "Responsiveness, Responsibility, and Majority Rule," *The American Political Science Review* 46, no. 3 (1952): 797.

[54] Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23, no. 1 (2006): 116.

[55] See: Edward Sankowski, "Two Forms of Moral Responsibility," *Philosophical Topics* 18, no. 1 (1990).

collective responsibility.[56] Similarly, accountability takes on a different meaning when describing principal-agent relationships, in which a delegated agent is answerable to the authoritative principal. H.L.A. Hart describes this broad case of answerability in terms of role responsibility: "whenever a person occupies a distinctive place or office in a social organization, to which specific duties are attached to provide for the welfare of other sort to advance in some specific way the aims or purposes of the organization, he is properly said to be responsible for the performance of these duties, or for doing what is necessary to fulfill them."[57] This account of role responsibility can also be expanded to include the general answerability citizens have to the laws of their communities.[58]

The second sense of responsibility – the appropriate use of power – also contains a multitude of meanings. In one sense, it is an expansion of the idea of "role responsibilities," suggesting that those empowered have a higher standard to which they can be held accountable. But this sense can also be expanded to describe a broader sense of responsibility that binds all moral agents. Acting responsibly entails that one discharges one's duties and makes use of one's resources in a way that is rationally explicable or in conformity to community standards. Graham Haydon describes responsible action in this way as "an appreciation of the person's situation as an agent in the social world."[59] Here to be responsible is less about ascribing accountability for outcomes, but describes an ethical comportment in which individuals hold themselves accountable for the consequences of their actions.

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[56] This can refer to the responsibility of a collective body, even if the constituent members cannot be held responsible or ascriptions of responsibility to members of a collective body for its actions. On the former see: Joel Feinberg, "Collective Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 65, no. 21 (1968). On the latter see: D. E. Cooper, "Collective Responsibility," *Philosophy* 43, no. 165 (1968).

[57] H. L. A. Hart, *Punishment and Responsibility: Essays in the Philosophy of Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 212.

[58] Peter Cane describes law in these terms, as determining the scope and object of our responsibilities, and providing a shared framework to which ordinary behavior is answerable. Peter Cane, *Responsibility in Law and Morality* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2002), 31.

[59] Graham Haydon, "On Being Responsible," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 28, no. 110 (1978): 57.

This diversity of meanings does not in itself suggest that responsibility must be understood as a political concept. Responsibility is certainly appraisive, making a normative claim with clear evaluative implications, and is internally complex, necessarily referring to a variety of conditions and circumstances for evaluation including: freedom, choice, nature, coercion, social position, authority, and obligation. However, political concepts are those with contending and not merely diverse meanings. Responsibility should be understood as a political concept only if its correct interpretation is the subject of political contestation, these contending interpretations are used to settle political disputes with differential outcomes, and project different visions of political order.

The rich history of philosophical debate over moral responsibility makes such an argument initially plausible.[60] Debates between staunch defenders of moral responsibility and its critics are both perennial and unlikely to be resolved. These debates are intractable, because they are not semantic debates, but debates over, according to P. F. Strawson, "a general framework of human life."[61] Because partisans rely on fundamentally different accounts of human agency, freedom, and causality, they cannot be resolved through philosophical argument. Galen Strawson, a critic of moral responsibility, admits as much. Despite believing in the logical inescapability of arguments denying the reality of moral responsibility, he concedes that the "heart of the experience of freedom and moral responsibility" lie in entrenched worldviews and daily practices. As such, "they are the fundamental source of our inability to give up belief in true or ultimate moral responsibility."[62]

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[60] A detailed study of debates in the metaphysics of agency over free will, causal determinism, and moral responsibility is beyond the scope of this study. Such debates unfortunately tend to abstract away from the political contexts in which responsibility is invoked. For an overview, see: Laura Waddell Ekstrom, ed. *Agency and Responsibility: Essays on the Metaphysics of Freedom* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001); John Martin Fischer et al., *Four Views on Free Will* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007).

[61] P. F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," in *Agency and Responsibility: Essays on the Metaphysics of Freedom*, ed. Laura Waddell Ekstrom (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, [1963] 2001), 192-93.

[62] Strawson, "Impossibility of Responsibility," 10.

Different conceptions of responsibility, or its entire negation, turn on fundamentally different conceptions of persons and their relationship to the world and therefore invite contestation.

A brief etymological overview of the word "responsibility" demonstrates the political stakes of contestation over its proper interpretation. The noun "responsibility" and the adjective "responsible" derive from the Latin *responsus* or *responsum* through the French *responsible* and *responsabilité*.[63] The English words themselves are of a relatively modern origin. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first use of "responsibility" dates to 1642 and the first use of "responsible" dates to 1558-9.[64] Despite this recent linguistic innovation, Antonio Y. Vázquez-Arroyo traces important precursors in the history of political thought from Aristotle, through the Roman thought and the Christian natural law tradition, up to Italian Republicanism.[65] Crucially, in both its pre-history and modern incarnation, responsibility is grounded on the idea of answerability, and thus "what is clear" according to Vázquez-Arroyo, "is the pervasiveness of its external connotations, its projection outward, to what is generalized and common–either toward someone or something: principle, person, obligation, etc." (65). As a form of answerability, responsibility refers to some demand placed on an agent that requires a response.[66]

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[63] William Grimshaw, "Responsible," in *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Philadelphia: Grigg, Elliot & Co., 1848); Walter W. Skeat, "Respond,"ibid. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893); Joseph E. Worcester, "Responsibility," in *A New Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Philidelphia: J. B. Lippincott Compnay, 1910); Eric Partridge, "Responsible," in *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (New York: Greenwich House, 1966).

[64] "Responsibility, N." *Oxford English Dictionary*. Richard McKeon traces the first uses of responsibility in English, French, and German to political debates in the eighteenth century, and the first uses of responsible to the thirteenth century in French, the sixteenth in English, and the seventeenth in German. Richard McKeon, "The Development and Significance of the Concept of Responsibility," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 39, no. 1 (1957): 8.

[65] Antonio Y. Vázquez-Arroyo, *Political Responsibility: Responding to Predicaments of Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 65-78.

[66] Vazquez-Arroyo conceives of this in terms of responding to a "predicament of power." *Ibid.*, x. Shalini Satkunanandan similarly emphasizes the link between responsibility and response: "Responsibility, then, includes an understanding of the compelling demands upon us in terms of debts owed *and* also an understanding of these demands as requests for a response." Shallini Satkunanandan, *Extraordinary Responsibility: Politics Beyond the Moral Calculus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 8. These recent contributions to the theory of responsibility will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

In Freeden's terms, then, responsibility's ineliminable core feature consists in answerability

or the capability of responding to some demand. Contestation over the quasi-contingent features of

responsibility is apparent in its various appearances in early Modern Europe. In its earliest uses,

responsibility settled the meaning of answerability in terms of a person's reliability or

trustworthiness.[67] Reliability was further decontested in the seventeenth century to refer to credit-

worthiness; to be responsible was to be accountable for one's debts.[68] By the eighteenth century,

"responsibility" was used to describe political relationships, specifically the obligations of those in

positions of public authority.[69] It is in this sense that the word "irresponsible" first appears in

Milton's *Tenure of Kings* of 1649.[70] According to McKeon, in its eighteenth century popularization,

responsibility described "a reciprocal relation of individual and state" where "a man is responsible

under law if he is accountable for the consequences of his action" and "officials are responsible to

rulers or to citizens" before developing into more expansive notions of cultural and moral

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[67] Responsibility's first use occurs in a pamphlet by Henry Parker defending members of the Vintners' Company against allegations of business fraud. Henry Parker, *The Vintners Answer to Some Scandalous Pamphlets...* (London1642), 20. Parker's strategy in the pamphlet was to distribute responsibility in order to lessen the punishment: "The Vintners hope to be excused, it not *a Toto*, yet *a Tanto*. That since the same Indentures were drawn also by the Kings Councell, in whose judgments and responsibility, the Vintners had reason to confide…" (20). This text has received little scholarly attention, but is discussed in detail in Michael Mendle, *Henry Parker and the English Civil War: The Political Thought of the Public's 'Privado'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 141-44. The adjective form, responsible, is first used in the *Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh* to describe some "honest responsible neighbors of this burgh [*honest responsibill nychtbouris of this burgh*]" that would secure the jewels of the sacristy of the Church of Saint Geill. "Extracts from the Records: 1559, Jan-June," in *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh 1557-1571*, ed. J. D. Marwick (Edinburgh: Scottish Burgh Records Society, 1875), 27.

[68] The *OED* notes several such uses including W. Wilbee's 1647's *Secunda Pars*: "Mr Say was a responsible man, and well able to pay." Amon Wilbee, *Seconda Pars, De Comparatis Comparandis: Seu Justificationis Regis Caroli, Comparate, Contra Parliamentum* (Oxford1647), 6.

[69] The *OED* locates the first such use in a Letter to the Earl of —— published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1765, which describes a former minister as someone "without office and responsibility." "Letter to the Earl of ----," *The Gentleman's Magazine*1765, 351.

[70] "Irresponsible," in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). Milton's text justifies potential for an armed violent rebellion against an "unbridl'd Potentate or Tyrant" who claims "such high and irresponsible license over mankind to havock and turn upside-down whole kingdoms of men" J. M. Milton, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (London: Matthew Simmons, 1650).f Strikingly, the subtitle of the text is "Proving that it is lawfull, and hath been so through all ages, for any, who have the power, to call to account a Tyrant, or wicked King, and after due conviction, to depose, and put him to death, if the ordinary Magistrate have neglected, or deny'd to doe it."

responsibility.[71] Such was the sense of responsibility invoked by Publius in *Federalist LXX*, published in 1788, as the "due responsibility" of a magistrate to the people that provides "safety in the republican sense."[72]

These differences in usage and meaning testify to the perennial difficult question of "*what* and *who* are the subjects and objects of responsibility: who are the entities that are either deemed responsible or to which an individual or collectivity is responsible?" These questions require "understanding scopes of action, structures, and contingencies, which are dialectically interrelated in the way a political situation to which a political actor responds is constituted."[73] The quasi-contingent elements of the concept of responsibility are settled not through conceptual clarification, but by their location in a discursive field that is constituted by a particular political situation. The proper subject, object, scope, and evaluative criteria of responsibility are not settled in the core meaning of "answerable" or "accountable" and therefore must be settled in specific discursive usages and political practices.

Yet, responsibility is political in a further sense. As I have argued, political concepts not only gain settled meaning in particular political contexts, but in turn settle political disputes in particular ways. Ascribing responsibility is literally a means by which events in the world are accounted for and through which the world is made sensible. To decide who or what is responsible for any given outcome does not merely describe the world, but orders the world in a particular causal sequence

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[71] McKeon, 28. See also Pennock, "Responsiveness, Responsibility, and Majority Rule," 797 and Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 162.

[72] Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Signet Classics, [1788] 2003), 422. Publius goes on to describe in this essay that magistrates are best held accountable to the people as individuals, as a defense against a pluralistic executive. Such a proposal would diffuse responsibility. Instead, Publius contends that the executive must be "personally responsible" to maintain republican accountability (428).

[73] Vázquez-Arroyo, *Political Responsibility* x-xi. Similarly, Scott Veitch emphasizes the importance of the historical and political contexts from which concepts of responsibility have emerged, because "to the extent that the technologies of responsibility are the result—indeed, the very mechanisms—of social processes, then the idea that individual responsibility is, in some way, prior to, or separate from, the influence of these technologies is extremely difficult to sustain." Veitch, *Law and Irresponsibility*, 39.

and provides an implicit normative evaluation. One found responsible for harmful action, such as murder or theft, becomes guilty, blameworthy, or liable, and thus subject to redress. One found responsible for a beneficial occurrence, in contrast, is praised.

These normative evaluations further serve to shape the social and political world. Hayek describes assigning responsibility as "a device that society has developed to cope with our inability to look into other people's minds and, without resorting to coercion, to introduce order into our lives."[74] While I will dispute Hayek's claim that this ordering is done "without resorting to coercion" explicitly in the next chapter, the idea that responsibility should be conceived of as a social and political convention to order collective life is important. To hold an individual accountable not only plays a disciplinary function, directing "our attention to those causes of events that depend on our actions,"[75] but also works to identify moral and legal standing in the community. In a case before the State of New York Supreme Court, a chimpanzee named Tommy was denied *habeas corpus* and redress for unlawful detainment because, "unlike human beings, chimpanzees cannot bear any legal duties, submit to societal responsibilities or be held legally accountable for their actions." Judge P. J. Peters' decision continues, "In our view, it is this incapability to bear any legal responsibilities and societal duties that renders it inappropriate to confer upon chimpanzees the legal rights […] that have been afforded to human beings."[76] The link between responsibility and moral personhood is given its most explicit articulation in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, for whom: "A *person* is a subject whose action can be *imputed* to him [*Zurechnung*]."[77] Practices of responsibility both help

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[74] Hayek, *Constitution of Liberty*, 77. Peter Cane similarly argues that the chief function of law is not holding individuals accountable but providing a clear sense of what one's responsibilities are. Legal sanctions are responsibility practices whose primary function is to remind individuals of their responsibilities. Cane, *Responsibility in Law and Morality*, 63.

[75] Hayek, *Constitution of Liberty*, 79

[76] *People Ex Rel. The Nonhuman Rights Project Inc. V Lavery*, 6 (2014).

[77] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1797] 1996), 16; AK: 6.223.

shape our conception of the proper duties of conduct and our sense of obligation to others while

are also crucial to our conception of humanity and moral personality.

As such, different decontestations of responsibility – different ways of deciding the subjects,

objects, scope, and evaluative criteria of responsibility – correspond to different orderings of the

political world. For example, Hayek explicitly rejects collective responsibility and insists that

responsibility "must be individual responsibility," because a free society premised on liberty is only

possible if individuals are conceived of as wholly responsible for their actions.[78] Similarly, Vázquez-

Arroyo charts how different conceptions of the proper object of responsibility, whether the political

community, the law, God, or one's self, fundamentally alter whether responsibility is conceived of as

political, moral, or ethical.[79] Satkunanandan demonstrates how differences in scope and evaluative

criteria entail different ways of encountering the world. Responsibility described as analogous to

financial debt, what she describes as "calculable responsibility," takes responsibility as something

amenable to calculation – as a series of debts that can be identified in advance, reckoned up,

negotiated, balanced out, and discharged."[80] This form of responsibility casts the world as

fundamentally calculable and quantifiable and treats political questions as balancing the harms and

consequences of action against each other. Different strategies of determining the precise meaning

of responsibility do not only reflect particular historical contexts, but also entail different ways of

making sense of the political world.

When responsibility is treated as a political concept, whose meaning is not only ambiguous

in the abstract but whose meaning is settled in political discourse with political implications, begins

to explain the tension with which this chapter began. Because the question of responsibility is never

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[78] Hayek, *Constitution of Liberty*, 83. This argument will receive more substantive attention in the next chapter.
[79] Vázquez-Arroyo, *Political Responsibility*, Chapter 2, especially 103-104.
[80] Satkunanandan, *Extraordinary Responsibility*, 2.

simply "who is responsible?" but entails always involves questions of "to whom or to what," "to what extent," "for what purpose," and "under what criteria," it is impossible to reduce it to a binary of responsible/irresponsible. That dominant narratives of responsibility are inadequate to make sense of political challenges such as climate change does not imply that it is impossible to take responsibility in these cases. On the contrary, these contemporary political challenges exemplify predicaments demanding a political response. The question becomes, instead: how can responsibility be theorized in response to these political dilemmas?

III-The Political and Theoretical Problem of Responsibility

The dilemma of responsibility – the disconnect between commonsense conceptions and dominant narratives of responsibility and the dynamics of political life – point towards the need to critically interrogate responsibility. By orienting a political analysis of this concept, this chapter raises a series of new questions about intuitive ideas of responsibility. How and why have they captured our moral and political imagination? What forms of politics do they prefigure? How do they remain entrenched, despite being beset by not only philosophical skepticism but practical and political challenges? And, potentially most importantly, what other interpretations and practices of responsibility could better respond to the modern predicament?

The three poles of political analysis identified in this chapter – contestability, decontestation, and imagination – provide both a general outline of political theory as a mode of inquiry and anticipate the analysis of Nietzsche's critique of responsibility in Chapter 3. As a mode of inquiry, political theory must attend to both the contestability of political concepts, whether analyzing contending ideological discourses or tracing changing historical meanings, as well as how their meanings are settled in particular discourses to resolve political disputes. Political theorists should evaluate the competing political visions of these contending settlements, reconstructing their assumptions about the world and the forms of political life they empower. This mode of analysis can

be equally applied to studies of the history of political thought or analysis of contemporary or historical discourse in "ordinary" politics. It is best put to use, I show in this study, by blurring the lines between these two categories: analyzing political theoretical texts as discursive attempts to settle the meaning of responsibility and analyzing public political discourse as making theoretically interesting claims about how political life is and should be structured. Importantly, political theory must attend to the dynamics of power at work in these discursive settlements. Existing meanings reflect and maintain particular distributions and relations of power, and these systems limit who is able to contest dominant meanings and the range of meanings deemed acceptable.

These three dimensions can also be seen at work in Nietzsche's own genealogical critique of responsibility. His "natural histories" treat moral values as historical artifacts that organize the world in meaningful ways reflecting a particular social perspective rather than philosophical truths. This does not mean that they are meaningless or arbitrary; moral values serve as a second nature, making them difficult, if not impossible, to discard at will. While not using the same language as this chapter, Nietzsche's approach aims to both uncover the psychological and political means by which contingent values become accepted as natural as well as to trace the forms of life they enable and foreclose.

With this provisional understanding of responsibility as a political concept or value in place, I turn now to one particular interpretation of responsibility which has come to dominate political thinking, discourse, and action in the United States. Narratives of "personal responsibility," which insist both that the sole causes of social harms are individuals' discrete choices and that the solution to such ills is a reinvigorated sense of personal responsibility, have become so ubiquitous that personal responsibility is asserted as an American ideal tantamount to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Though conservatives have bemoaned the apparent abandonment of this apparently founding ideal, I will demonstrate through an analysis of twentieth and twenty-first century political

discourse and political theory that the opposite is true. While taking a variety of forms and permutations, the idea of personal responsibility is fundamentally entrenched in the contemporary political imagination despite partisan affiliation or theoretical camp. I will further articulate the dangers of the individualistic and moralistic politics prefigured by these narratives to emphasize the need to theorize a profoundly political interpretation of responsibility.

Chapter 2:
Personalizing Responsibility

I-The American Virtue of Personal Responsibility

The previous chapter's argument that responsibility must be studied as invoked in political

discourse to settle political disputes shifts the types of questions studies of responsibility should ask.

Instead of asking how it is possible for human beings to be held responsible, or under what

conditions should individuals be held accountable for their actions, new questions emerge. How is

responsibility used in contemporary political discourse? To what political purposes and within what

ideological constellations is it invoked? How do these discourses shape the possibilities for political

thought, speech, and action? To answer these questions, this chapter turns to both twentieth- and

twenty-first century American political thought and discourse.

A common trope in American conservativism suggests that responsibility is no longer valued

in American political culture. These arguments suggest that liberalism, secularism, and the claims of

social justice have waged war upon and eroded this quintessential American ideal. Dennis Prager, for

example, describes, in a lecture at the Heritage Foundation, an "onslaught against individual

responsibility" culminating in an American movement "to have no one fail."[1] Responsibility is

defined as personal responsibility – individuals should be held solely accountable for their life

outcomes – and it is treated as a foundational American value to be defended and advanced against

the onslaught of contemporary liberalism. However, the rise of this discourse has coincided with a

remarkable rollback of the welfare state in the latter part of the twentieth century, buttressed, in no

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[1] Dennis Prager, "The American Tradition of Personal Responsibility," *The Heritage Lectures* 515 (1995): 8. According to Prager, the assault on responsibility takes on a myriad of forms: critiques of social stigma, which he interprets as a decline of social standards of acceptable behavior (4); increasing concern for mental wellness, which he describes as a preference for "feelings" over "behavior" (5); secularism, which he interprets as a flight from Christianity's insistence on divine judgment (6-7); tolerance, which he interprets as refusing to hold someone accountable for their actions (8); arguments for healthcare reform (9); attempts to understand the psychology of criminal behavior (9); sociological investigations into the effects of race, class, and gender (10); and the substitution of "compassion for standards" (11).

small part, by narrative that the "American ideal of personal responsibility" needed to be recovered.

As Samuel Schefter summarizes, although "there is a widespread sense that traditional notions of

responsibility are under attack and that their influence is eroding, there is no evidence that the

impulse to employ the concepts and categories of responsibility is disappearing or even diminishing

significantly in strength."[2] The popularity and success of this narrative challenges the narrative of

decline, by demonstrating personal responsibility's immense psychological and political purchase.

In this chapter, I make an even stronger argument: rather than a beleaguered ethical

principle, personal responsibility has come to dominate political discourse and imagination in the

United States. This has reshaped the discursive environment and constrained both the range of

legitimate policy positions and the scope of political imagination. Specifically, I advance three claims.

First, no longer a conservative or libertarian argument, narratives of personal responsibility have

come to define the American political commonsense, framing political liberals' defenses of the

welfare state and philosophical liberalism's account of distributive justice. The difficulty of

overcoming this consensus is further illuminated by its persistence in the writings of some of its

staunchest critics.

Second, narratives of personal responsibility generate two political pathologies. First, by

framing responsibility narrowly as adhering to individuals, they obscure the productive role of social

structures in political life. When responsibility is conceived of as only ascribing to individuals,

structural injustices are obscured, and it is easy to disavow one's complicity for human suffering by

denying a direct causal link. Thus, as responsibility becomes personalized, it encourages a strategy of

buck-passing. When responsibility is framed individualistically, only individuals who directly caused

harm can be held accountable; it becomes easy to dismiss responsibility under the aegis of "it's not

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[2] Samuel Scheffler, "Responsibility, Reactive Attitudes, and Liberalism in Philosophy and Politics," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 21, no. 4 (1992): 304.

my fault." Second, and fueled by this displacement, these discourses intensify a politics of resentment, directing guilt and blame towards the suffering themselves. Having foreclosed the possibility of attributing suffering to unjust structures, narratives of personal responsibility prevent the infinite dispersal of responsibility by insisting on a blameworthy individual. With no other candidate for accountability, the suffering themselves, the narrative goes, must have behaved in such way to deserve their lot in life. In a perverse circle, the discursive hegemony of personal responsibility frames political questions as reducible to individual action, encouraging both its disavowal and its moralizing intensification.

Finally, there is nothing inevitable about this discursive dominance. By both highlighting the contingent development of personal responsibility and demonstrating the existence of opposing narratives of responsibility in twentieth-century American political discourse, I show that the terrain of political discourse did not have to become what it is. This has two implications for the broader argument: personal responsibility is not a natural outgrowth of American political culture and there are immanent potentials within this tradition for revising dominant conceptions of responsibility.

This chapter proceeds as follows. In Section II, I trace the development of narratives of personal responsibility since the middle of the twentieth century, demonstrating their success in transforming political discourse and outlining the pathologies they generate. I focus, in this section, on the writings of Hayek and Barry Goldwater as key ideological pioneers, and on the academic and political networks that distributed their ideas. Subsequently I show the extent to which these narratives have spread, through readings of President Clinton's and President Obama's political liberalism (Section III) and John Rawls' and Ronald Dworkin's philosophical liberalism (Section IV). In both of these sections, I demonstrate the ubiquity of narratives of personal responsibility, such that their defenses of liberal social policies, the welfare state, and modest redistributive efforts are framed not as challenges to this trope but within its own terms. Additionally, despite having

different political objectives than Hayek and Goldwater, they reproduce the same pathologies. Section V demonstrates the unique challenges of critiquing and displacing this narrative, turning to the writings of William E. Connolly and Judith Butler. While offering strong critiques of these tropes, which inform my own account of the pathologies of personal responsibility, their own turns to ethics are unable to fully extricate themselves from a focus on the self as the primary object of responsibility. In Section VI, I turn to the writings of Herbert Croly and John Dewey as evidence of the existence of contending interpretations responsibility; both offered a robust account of social responsibility that explicitly challenged the conceits of personal responsibility.

The diversity of sources constituting this chapter's archive may raise hermeneutic concerns. While not wishing to entirely eliminate differences in genre and occasion, the account of political analysis articulated in Chapter 1 suggests the importance of moving back and forth across different genres. My goal is to show how theoretical conceptions of responsibility and popular political narratives mutually shape each other, making particular discursive moves possible and rendering others illegitimate. Texts of political theory must be interpreted as responses to the political world, and public political discourse should not be treated as beneath theoretical analysis. Reading these diverse texts, I track responsibility's decontestation as personal responsibility in both theoretical and political discourse as well as across the political spectrum.[3]

II-The Rise of Personal Responsibility

Following the Second World War, ideological entrepreneurs seized upon responsibility as a crucial value within American political discourse. In the writings of politicians and political thinkers, personal responsibility was articulated as a, if not *the*, necessary check on totalitarian collectivism.

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[3] Additionally, I am not drawing a strict causal link between discursive innovations and policy outcomes. Instead, following Freeden, while "the complexity of political ideas does not permit the construction of a clear causal chain," I adopt, what he calls "a softer and more appropriate form of 'causality' [that] looks at logical and cultural constraints as shutting out certain options, while encouraging the use of others." *Political Theory of Political Thinking*, 39.

While trumpeted as a return to both "classical liberalism" and the founding principles of the United States, this conception of responsibility crafted a novel political subject. Though originating in marginal challenges to the "post-war liberal consensus," by the 1980s this semantic shift had reorganized the discursive space, such that liberal defenses of the welfare state and social could only be made by appealing to, rather than challenging, the value of personal responsibility.

Writing in the context of the early Cold War, and fearful of excesses of the New Deal's welfare state,[4] Friedrich Hayek, in *The Road to Serfdom* and *The Constitution of Liberty*, and Barry Goldwater, in his *The Conscience of a Conservative* challenged the liberal account of a collective social responsibility with strident defenses of personal responsibility.[5] Concerned that America's welfare state could become totalitarian,[6] with citizens treated as "wards and dependents" of the state that has now "gathered unto itself unlimited political and economic power and is thus able to rule as

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[4] As Daniel Stedman Jones demonstrates in his study of the rise of neoliberalism after World War II, it is impossible to understand both the tenor, style, and substance of the claims of Hayek and his Chicago School colleagues as well as American receptivity, outside of the context of the Cold War, America's geographical, demographic, and racial divisions, and America's newfound status as a political and economic superpower. See Daniel Stedman Jones, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 86, 100-01.

[5] It is less than clear whether these conceptual transformations should be understood as changes within American liberalism or as challenges to it. For Freeden, Goldwater is a conservative, fearful of the "social irresponsibility" of individualism and the importance of strong social structures. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 399. Indeed, Goldwater explicitly defines his conservativism in opposition to liberalism and insists on the importance of both natural law and order. Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1960] 2007), 2-5. Yet he insists on maximizing freedom (6), the role of the Constitution in preserving responsible government (10), and the ultimate right of private property (54). Hayek, by contrast, explicitly rejects conservatism as "paternalistic, nationalistic, and power adoring" as well as being "traditionalistic, anti-intellectual, and often mystical." Friedrich A. Hayek, "Foreword to the 1956 American Paperback Edition," in *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, [1956] 2007), 45. This argument is expanded in *The Constitution of Liberty*'s postscript entitled 'Why I am not a Conservative." *The Constitution of Liberty*, 397-414. Furthermore, Hayek himself defines his project as attempting to "restate and make more coherent the doctrines of classical nineteenth-century liberalism." "Preface to the 1976 Edition," in *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, [1976] 2007), 42. Yet Hayek displays conservative tendencies by bemoaning the twentieth century's apparent rejection of "the basic ideas on which Western civilization has been built." *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, [1944] 2007), 67. Similarly his faith in the emergence of order from the "spontaneous and uncontrolled efforts of individuals" (69) borders on the mysticism for which he decries conservatives. For Freeden, Hayek's libertarianism should not be understood as a liberal ideology because of the way it exclusively elevates liberty as a core concept at the expense of the remaining liberal concepts. See: Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 298-312.

[6] Hayek, *Road to Serfdom*, 193-195

absolutely as any oriental despot,"[7] they defend individual liberty and responsibility as the only line of defense.

For Goldwater, "Every man, for his individual good and for the good of his society, is responsible for his *own* development. The choices that govern his life are choices that *he* must make; they cannot be made by any other human being, or by a collectivity of human beings" (4). Maintaining this strong sense of personal responsibility is necessary to preserve oneself as "a dignified, industrious, self-reliant *spiritual* being" (68). Similarly, Hayek vehemently argued that personal responsibility was necessary to preserve individual liberty: "Liberty not only means that the individual has both the opportunity and the burdens of choice; it also means that he must bear the consequences of his actions and will receive praise or blame for them. Liberty and responsibility are inseparable."[8] However, in distinction with Goldwater, Hayek asserts that personal responsibility is crucial to develop instrumental and economic rationality, by forcing individuals to make better choices by bearing the negative consequences for poor decisions.[9] Therefore, Hayek rejects as a category mistake any conception of collective or social responsibility. [10]

While originally outside the political consensus, Hayek and Goldwater worked to transform American political discourse, a project that culminated in the "Reagan Revolution" of the 1980s. Believing that "the task of the political philosopher can only be to influence public opinion,"[11] Hayek sought to create academic environments, institutions, and networks that could challenge

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[7] Goldwater, *Conscience of a Conservative*, 64.

[8] Hayek, *Constitution of Liberty*, 72.

[9] *Ibid.*, 68. On this point there is significant disagreement between Goldwater and Hayek. While both argue that responsibility is key to self-sufficiency and industriousness, Goldwater is also concerned with the danger of over emphasizing the "material side of man's nature" and ignoring that "he is also a spiritual creature with spiritual needs and desires." Goldwater, *Conscience of a Conservative*, 2.

[10] Hayek, *Constitution of Liberty*, 84. He also writes, "In a free society there cannot be any collective responsibility of members of a group as such, unless they have, by concerted action, all made themselves individually and severally responsible" (83).

[11] Hayek, *Constitution of Liberty*, 411.

socialism's hold on the academy.[12] Beginning with the Mont Pèlerin Society and the second Chicago

School of Economics, Hayek worked to construct a "political movement to counter the intellectual

traditions that would, as Hayek thought, inexorably lead to the emergence of totalitarian regimes

throughout the Western world."[13] As Daniel Stedman Jones documents, "Between 1943 and 1980, a

web of institutions and people grew up to spread and popularize neoliberal ideas so that eventually

they seemed the natural alternative to liberal or social democratic policies."[14] Now popularized and

explicitly politicized, this conceptual reformulation was prepared to offer real ideological and policy

alternatives when the economic and political crises of the 1970s threatened the post-war

consensus.[15]

Goldwater's unsuccessful 1964 presidential campaign helped launch Ronald Reagan's

national political career, as Reagan's famous "A Time for Choosing" speech given in support of

Goldwater, catapulted him into the national spotlight.[16] Four years later, Reagan echoed Goldwater's

conception of responsibility during testimony at the Republican National Convention in 1968: "We

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[12] See Friedrich A. Hayek, "The Intellectuals and Socialism," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 16, no. 3 (1949).. Hayek is not a conspiracy theorist; he believes that intellectuals are drawn to socialism out of "mostly honest convictions and good intentions" (422). Their error lies in two prejudices: "The first is that they generally judge all particular issues exclusively in the light of certain general ideals; the second that the characteristic errors of any age are frequently derived from some genuine new truths it has discovered, and they are erroneous applications of new generalizations which have proved their value in other fields" (423)

[13] Rob Van Horn and Philip Mirowski, "The Rise of the Chicago School of Economics and the Birth of Neoliberalism," in *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 149. Van Horn and Mirowski reject the assertion that Frank Knight founded the Chicago School, and instead credit Henry Simons, Aaron Director, "and, most of all Hayek" as its "actual progenitors." Misattributing Knight as the founder has two important implications: "it has diverted attention away from the fact that the inauguration and establishment of the Chicago School constituted just one component of a much more elaborate transnational institutional project to reinvent a liberalism that had some prospect of challenging the socialist doctrines ascendant in the immediate postwar period. It also, unfortunately, muddles the conceptual outlines of the tenets of this resulting neoliberalism, such that a lucid comprehension of its economic and political infrastructure becomes effectively impossible" (158).

[14] Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, 153. Jones elaborates this web by precisely tracing the links between think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Foundation for Economic Freedom, and the Institute for Humane Studies with thinkers such as Hayek, Von Mises, Friedman, and others (152-179). See also: Angus Burgin, *The Great Persuasion: Reinventing Free Markets since the Depression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[15] Jones, *Masters of the Universe* 178-179. Jones stresses the historical and political contingency of this success: "much in the end was the result of historical accident and a particular alignment of circumstances in the 1970s and 1980s" (179).

[16] *Ibid.,* 179.

must reject the idea that every time a law is broken, society is guilty rather than the lawbreaker. It is time to restore the American precept that each individual is accountable for his actions."[17] Reagan also praised the Heritage Foundation[18] as "leaders of an intellectual revolution that recaptured and renewed the great lessons of Western Culture, a revolution that is rallying to the defense of that culture and to the cause of human freedom."[19] By the 1980s, the ideological environment had shifted such that ideas of personal responsibility, instrumental rationality, and market freedom were dominant and intractable, and would shape future political discourse.[20] In culmination, "the wide adoption of this neoliberal theology" shifted the discursive environment of American political thinking towards questions such as the "linkage of economic and political freedom" and the "elevation of the market as the supreme area of human activity, development and growth" (270).

This interpretation of responsibility, as adhering uniquely to individuals and as the necessary prerequisite for liberty, projected a different conception of politics. Individuals bear primary responsibility for socio-economic outcomes; the state not only has no responsibility to ensure a just distribution of opportunities and resources, but is prohibited from such activity. Almost explicitly following Hayek's argument, responsibility became the watchword for political discourse and the means of creating a new political-economic subject.[21] Individuals are promised greater freedom and

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[17] "G.O.P. Testimony on Violence."
[18] The foundation was founded in 1973 and directed since 1977 by Ed Feulner who sought to popularize Hayek's libertarian theories for politicians. See Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, 162-163.
[19] Ronald W. Reagan, "Remarks at a Dinner Marking the 10th Anniversary of the Heritage Foundation," in *Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagn* (Ronald Reagn Presidential Library, 1983).
[20] Jones, *Masters of the Universe*, 271.
[21] See: Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lecturs at the Collège De France*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2008). Wendy Brown extensively develops this argument, articulating the processes of responsibilization as crucial to the political rationality of neoliberalism: "Responsibilization signals a *regime* in which the singular human capacity for responsibility is deployed to constitute and govern subjects through which their conduct is organized and measured, remaking and reorienting them for a neoliberal order." Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 133. Butler, as will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections, similarly argues against how responsibility has been colonized to justify cuts to social spending and efforts to encourage "self-reliance." Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable* (New York: Verso, 2009), 35.

limited government, but "the price of this involvement is that they must assume active responsibility for these activities, both for carrying them out, and of course, for their outcomes."[22]

This political imaginary generates the first pathology: social structures are obscured and any attempt to account for the structural causes of poverty or other forms of suffering is rejected as producing moral hazard.[23] Hayek makes this point explicit: "Justice, like liberty and coercion, is a concept which, for the sake of clarity, ought to be confined to the deliberate treatment of men by other men."[24] Treating justice as a societal obligation, Hayek contends, would grant the state immense power over the individual, denying individual freedom. Similarly, while Hayek contends that "there are good reasons […] to make provision for the weak or infirm or for the victims of unforeseeable disaster," the poor do not gain a right to make redistributive demands. "The fact that all citizens have an interest in the common provision of some services is no justification for anyone's claiming as a right a share in all the benefits," he concludes, "It may set a standard for what some ought to be willing to give, but not for what anyone can demand" (101) Hayek's rhetoric is instructive framing suffering in terms of misfortune rather than justice. There is no discussion of why "the weak," the "infirm," and "victims of unforeseeable disaster" are unable to live meaningful lives given the current structure of society; that structure is insulated, while the remainders are salved through charity and financial recompense.

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[22] Graham Burchell, "Liberal Government and Techniques of the Self," *Economy and Society* 22, no. 3 (1993): 276. In their study of insurance practices, Richard Ericson, Dean Barry, and Aaron Doyle also define individual responsibility as a key tenet of neoliberalism. The others are: a limited state, market fundamentalism, an emphasis on risk management, and treating inequality as a choice. Richard Ericson, Dean Barry, and Aaron Doyle, "The Moral Hazards of Neo-Liberalism: Lessons from the Private Insurance Industry," ibid.29, no. 4 (2000): 522-33.

[23] Yair Aharoni specifically critiqued in 1981 the "shifting responsibility for risk" from individuals, consumers, and employees to governments, producers, and employers. Yair Aharoni, *The No-Risk Society* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1981), 39-70. He critiques the culmination of this logic in the "insurance state" that is "expected to compensate the individual for almost any loss he or she sustains and to shield the individual against almost any risk he or she may face" (200). Such a state is framed as inhibiting the American values of "more growth, more employment, more freedom, and less government intervention" (207).

[24] Hayek, *Constitution of Liberty*, 99.

Instead, generating the second pathology, Hayek suggests that given the inevitability of "accidents" to occur in the interactions of individuals, it is important for individuals to prepare for them.[25] Thus, narratives of personal responsibility shift "the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, etc., and for life in society into the domain for which the individual is responsible and transforming it into a problem of 'self-care.'"[26] This move is seen clearly in Charles Murray's popular and influential critique of welfare policy, *Losing Ground.* For Murray, welfare policy failed to instill the virtue of personal responsibility, by treating individuals as "un-responsible victim[s]."[27] Similar discourses are invoked in discussions of public health, transforming the right to healthcare into a personal duty to be well, framing illness in moral terms.[28]

Thus, responsibility becomes weaponized as a means to redistribute blame back towards the suffering, which both insulates existing social structures from critique and justifies ethical and political interventions to shape "irresponsible" individuals into responsible subjects. Hayek's defense of responsibility already foreshadows this move: "[…] we believe that, in general, the knowledge that he will be held responsible will influence a person's conduct in a desirable direction. In this sense, the assigning of responsibility does not involve the assertion of a fact. It is rather of the nature of a

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[25] *Ibid.*, 29. Hayek continues, "But they still remain chances and do not become certainties. They involve risks deliberately taken, the possible misfortune of individuals and groups who are as meritorious as other who prosper, the possibility of serious failure or relapse even for the majority, and merely a high probability of a net gain on balance. All we can do is to increase the chance that some special constellation of individual endowment and circumstance will result in the shaping of some new tool or the improvement of an old one, and to improve the prospect that such innovations will become rapidly known to those who can take advantage of them" (29-30).

[26] Thomas Lemke, "'The Birth of Bio-Politics': Michel Foucault's Lecture at the Collège De France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality," *Economy and Society* 30, no. 2 (2001): 201.

[27] Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980*, Tenth-Anniversary ed. (New York: Basic Books, [1984] 1994), 187. Murray also bemoans the loss of moral distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor that progressives challenged: "the next casualty of the assumption that 'the system is to blame' was the distinction between the deserving and the undeserving poor. […] The very term 'deserving poor' was laughed out of use—witness the reaction of political columnists and cartoonists to the use of 'truly needy' by the Reagan administration" (180-181).

[28] See: Rose Galvin, "Disturbing Notions of Chronic Illnes and Individual Responsibility: Towards a Genealogy of Morals," *Health* 6, no. 2 (2002); Monica Greco, "Psychosomatic Subjects and the 'Duty to Be Well'. Personal Agency within Medical Rationality," *Economy and Society* 22, no. 3 (1993).

convention intended *to make people observe certain rules.*[29] Hayek's passionate defense of individual

liberty, therefore, only applies to individuals who meet a certain threshold of responsible conduct;

those who do not are both blamed for their own suffering and subject to coercion. Or as Connolly

describes it, narratives of personal responsibility are "translated into rancor against those whom one

construes as escaping the dictates of that standard."[30]

The preceding discussion of narratives of personal responsibility has focused mostly on the

third pole of political analysis described in Chapter 1: reconstructing both the philosophical

assumptions made and political visions projected by this particular usage of responsibility. While the

historical survey of how these ideas spread and became institutionalized describes their

decontestation within the American right, it has not yet established the more ambitious claim that

this interpretation has become the American political commonsense, affecting the breadth of the

political spectrum. In the next sections, I take up this claim showing the pervasiveness of personal

responsibility and its ability to shape the contours of political discourse.

III- "Work and Responsibility:" Political Liberalism

In accepting the Democratic nomination for President in 1992, William J. Clinton issued a

stark warning to fathers who failed to pay child support: "Take responsibility for your children or we

will force you to do so. Because governments don't raise children; parents do." Echoing Reagan's

critique of welfare recipients, Clinton redefined liberalism in terms of personal responsibility.

Defining the "American ethic" as "rewarding hard work," he chastised liberals for placing their faith

in a "program in government for every problem." Clinton's liberalism famously promised to "end

welfare as we know it" instead declaring: "You will have, and you deserve, the opportunity, through

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[29] Hayek, *Constitution of Liberty*, 75. Emphasis added.

[30] William E. Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, Expanded ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 80.

training and education, through child care and medical coverage, to liberate yourself. But then, when

you can, you must work, because welfare should be a second chance, not a way of life."[31]

Clinton responded to the rise of personal responsibility as a central tenet of American

political discourse by rearticulating liberal policy within its terms. At his Inauguration, he challenged:

"We must do what America does best: offer more opportunity to all and demand responsibility from

all. It is time to break the bad habit of expecting something for nothing from our Government or

from each other. Let us all take more responsibility not only for ourselves and our families but for

our communities and our country."[32] Here, Clinton affirms personal responsibility as a core

American value, reflecting the settled semantic environment, and defends liberal economics in these

terms. This is not to say that he shares the conservative critiques of the welfare state, but that this

vision of the welfare state is unmistakably shaped by personal responsibility: social programs should

promote and encourage individual responsibility. Clinton makes this explicit in a speech promoting

his welfare proposal – the Work and Responsibility Act of 1994 – praising the "values that sustain us

all as citizens and as Americans, faith and family, work and responsibility, community and

opportunity,"[33] before identifying responsibility as the first step in changing a broken welfare

system.[34]

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[31] William J. Clinton, "Address Accepting the Presidential Nomination," (Speech at the Democratic National Convention in New York, 1992).

[32] "Inaugural Address," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United State: William J. Clinton* (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, 1993), 2.

[33] "Remarks on Welfare Reform in Kansas City, Missouri," in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents Volume 30, Issue 24 (June 20, 1994)* (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, 1994), 1279.

[34] Clinton, "Remarks on Welfare Reform," 1280. This sentiment is echoed in his statement at the signing of 1996's Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA): "this legislation provides an historic opportunity to end welfare as we know it and transform our broken welfare system by promoting the fundamental values of work, responsibility, and family." "Statement on Signing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996," in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents Volume 32, Issue 34 (August 26, 1996)* (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, 1996), 1487-88. Clinton's statement did include specific objections to the law as passed including: steep cuts to the Food Stamp program; denial of benefits to immigrants; and failing fund state based programs that provide food for children (1488-1489). He concludes by saying: "I am determined to work with Congress in a bipartisan effort to correct the provisions of this legislation that go too far

The rhetoric surrounding Clinton's own welfare proposal show how personal responsibility both depoliticizes poverty and intensifies moralistic discourses of victim blaming and scape-goating. In documents prepared by his domestic policy council, the proposal is specifically defended in terms of personal responsibility. The first sentence of the "Detailed Summary" reads: "The current welfare system is at odds with the core values Americans share: work, family, opportunity, responsibility." The President's proposal, it is claimed, offers "a simple compact that gives people more opportunity in return for more responsibility" because "responsibility is the value that will enable individuals and parents to do what programs cannot – because governments don't raise children, people do." [35]

This is not merely a rhetorical shift, but contributes to the construction of a self-responsible political and economic subject. Clinton's proposal makes this goal explicit: "One objective of welfare reform is to transform the culture of the welfare system–from an institutional system whose primary mission is to ensure that poor children have a minimal level of economic resources, to a system that focuses equal attention on the task of integrating their adult caretakers into the economic mainstream of society" (49). As such, the reform proposal centers on individual actions and choices instead of understanding poverty in terms of socio-economic structures. "From the very first day," Clinton's reformed system "will focus on making young parents self-sufficient. Working with a caseworker, each adult recipient will sign a *personal responsibility agreement* and develop an employability plan identifying the education, training, and job placement services needed to move into the workforce" (3, emphasis added). Instead of a mutual corresponding societal responsibility, the

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and have nothing to do with welfare reform. But, on balance, this bill is a real step forward for our country, for our values, and for people on welfare" (1489).

[35] Bruce Reed and Domestic Policy Council, "Work and Responsibility Act of 1994," in *Welfare Reform Series* (Clinton Digital Library, 1994), 2. There are a large number of different documents collected in this collection. For ease, I refer to the page numbers of the collected document. In talking points prepared for the "Welfare Reform Working Group," the proposal is articulated to emphasize "the values of work and responsibility (125) and as "a better way to reward work and responsibility" (126).

proposal conceives of society's responsibility in terms of "a broad array of incentives that the States can use to encourage responsible behavior" (5).[36]

The clearly stated goal of these proposals are to eliminate "dependency" on welfare through private sector employment.[37] Thus the proposal includes time limits for welfare receipts and strong sanctions for refusing a job offer or failing to follow the employability plan.[38] This rhetorical move, of equating poverty with a lack of personal responsibility for employment, ignores profound structural changes in the economy that produce jobless neighborhoods and communities including technological shifts that devalue unskilled labor, growing suburbanization, lack of social institutional resources, and global economic trends.[39] The focus on personal responsibility obscures such global economic, political, and technological shifts by relying on a simplistic notion of causality in which every effect has a single isolatable cause, which, according to Iris Marion Young, "thinks away large-scale social processes as relevant to assessing people's responsibility for their circumstances and their responsibilities to others."[40]

Poverty is explicitly framed as a caused by a lack of personal responsibility: "Although many face very serious barriers to employment, including physical disabilities, others are able to work but are not making progress toward self-sufficiency. Most long-term recipients are not on a track toward obtaining employment that will enable them to leave AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children]."[41] Echoing Hayek, welfare policies are seen as temporary, stopgap responses to

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[36] The summary continues this contractarian language later: "The underlying philosophy is one of mutual responsibility. The welfare agency will help recipients achieve self-sufficiency and will provide transitional cash assistance; in return, recipients will take responsibility for their lives and the economic well-being of their children" (14).

[37] The proposal documents emphasize the distinction between Clinton's proposal and "Workfare" as a "strong private-sector focus:" "Persons will be paid for performance–not paid a welfare check and sent out to a work site. This work-for-wages plan provides far greater *dignity and responsibility* than workfare. Moreover, the purpose of the WORK program is to help persons move into, rather than serve as a substitute for, unsubsidized employment" (21).

[38] *Ibid.,* 16.

[39] William Julius Wilson, "When Work Disappears: New Implications for Race and Urban Poverty in the Global Economy," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 3 (1999): 483-88.

[40] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 11.

[41] Reed and Domestic Policy Council, 'Work and Responsibility Act of 1994," 19.

misfortune rather than a governmental responsibility to ensure a secure social, economic, and political environment amenable to a flourishing life. In this respect, the eventual reform package of 1996 was successful, as the number of caseloads and recipients fell. Importantly, however, this did not correlate with escaping poverty, as those transitioning from assistance faced serious hardships such as food and housing insecurity, poor health care, and inadequate childcare at a greater proportion than the overall population, even including those in poverty.[42] The myopic focus on personal responsibility and self-sufficiency, by ignoring the structural economic, social and political transformations of the late twentieth century, limited the effectiveness of reform.

In addition to overly simplifying the causes and solutions to poverty, liberalism's embrace of personal responsibility generates and directs politically dangerous resentment to the already vulnerable. Single parents are specifically targeted and blamed for poverty, because "an awful lot of people are trapped in welfare because they are raising children on their own."[43] One of Clinton's strategies to reform welfare is to "send a powerful message […] that children should not be born until parents are married and fully capable of taking care of them" (1281). The ultimate piece of legislation, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act that Clinton signed, also exemplified this logic, attempting to reduce "out-of-wedlock pregnancies and births" through incentives, abstinence education programs, and child support penalties.[44] The focus on correcting individual irresponsible behavior, conceived of as the root cause of poverty, is made explicit in the "findings" of Title I of the law, which focus entirely on the claim that "marriage is the foundation of a successful society."[45] Such framing, as Barbara Ehrenreich argues, feeds the

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[42] Heather Boushey, "Former Welfare Families Need More Help: Hardships Await Those Making Transition to Workforce," (Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute, 2001), 5-6.

[43] Clinton, "Remarks on Welfare Reform," 1280. He continues in the same speech: "We also have to face the fact that we have a big welfare problem because the rate of children born out of wedlock, where there was no marriage, is going up dramatically" (1281).

[44] *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*, Pub. L. N. 104-193, (August, 22 1996).

[45] *Ibid.,* §101.

stereotype of welfare recipients as "lazy, over-weight, and endlessly fecund" and as "moral outlaws" who are "this way because welfare supported them in their slovenly, sexually indulgent ways."[46] That is, while it is undeniable that the causes of poverty can, in some instances, be traced to the actions of an individual in poverty, such thinking both overlooks the contexts and constraints in which such actions take place, and contributes to a pernicious political climate of blame and resentment.

In this climate, William Ryan observes, strategies that focus on "cultural deprivation" as the cause of poverty and locate "the stigma, the defect, the fatal difference […] *within* the victim, inside his skin" flourish. As he continues,

> With such an elegant formulation, the humanitarian can have it both ways. He can, all at the same time, concentrate his charitable interest on the defects of the victim, condemn the vague social and environmental stresses that produced the defect (some time ago), and ignore the continuing effect of victimizing social forces (right now).[47]

Once poverty is framed in such language, political responses must take the form of correcting this pathological defect, by incentivizing and encourage responsible actions. Such simplifying strategies of scapegoating and victim blaming are particularly salient during times of economic anxiety, as publics favor simple explanations of social problems over ones that emphasize complexity and uncertainty. As William Julius Wilson notes, "instead of associating citizens' problems with economic and political changes, these divisive messages encouraged them to turn on each other: race against race, citizens against immigrants, ethnic group against ethnic group."[48] By simplifying political questions into simple questions of deviant and irresponsible behavior, the discourse of personal responsibility simultaneously insulates the existing political and economic order from

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[46] Barbara Ehrenreich, "Chamber of Welfare Reform," *The Progressive* May 2002, 14.
[47] William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 7.
[48] Wilson, "When Work Disappears," 495.

critique and reform while generating politically divisive and dangerous resentment against already

vulnerable populations.

President Obama's liberalism has similar features. He praises Clinton's ability to articulate a

defense of liberalism within the terms of personal responsibility. Clinton's crucial insight, according

to Obama, was recognizing "the falseness of the choices being presented [...] He recognized that

not only societal responsibility but personal responsibility was needed to combat poverty."[49] While

he rejects dogmatic argument that welfare programs "breed dependency and reduce individual

responsibility, initiative, and choice" (147),[50] and condemns the greed and irresponsibility of Wall

Street as causes of the 2008 financial crisis,[51] he nevertheless accepts the basic premise of critiques of

the welfare state. He admits: "it did create some perverse incentives when it came to the work ethic

and family stability."[52] Similarly, he articulates defenses of the welfare state and modest redistributive

measures as necessary to secure the quintessential American value of personal responsibility, going

so far as to critique income inequality and "trickle-down" economics as antithetical to personal

responsibility. [53]

Yet, while Obama attempts to leverage this discursive settlement to defend the welfare state,

he further naturalizes the concept. He speaks of "an America where hard work paid off and

responsibility was rewarded and anyone could make it if they tried, no matter who you were, no

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[49] Obama, *Audacity of Hope*, 34.
[50] See also: Barack Hussein Obama, "Remarks During a Panel Discussion at the Catholic-Evangelical Leadership Summit on Overcoming Poverty at Georgetown University, May 12, 2015," (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, 2015). During this roundtable, Obama describes the way responsibility is used to incite class antagonisms: "And over the last 40 years, sadly, I think there's been an effort to either make folks mad at folks at the top or to make mad—be mad at folks at the bottom. And I think the effort to suggest that the poor are sponges, leaches, are—don't want to work, are lazy, are undeserving, got traction. And look, it's still being propagated" (9).
[51] "Remarks at Osawatomie High School in Osawatomie, Kansas, December 6, 2011," (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, 2011), 2.
[52] Obama, *Audacity of Hope*, 157.
[53] "Our success has never just been about the survival of the fittest. It's about building a nation where we're all better off. We pull together. We pitch in. We do our part. We believe that hard work will pay off, that responsibility will be rewarded, and that our children will inherit a nation where those values live on." Obama, "Remarks at Osawatomie," 9.

matter where you came from, no matter how you started out."[54] Such language points to the

rhetorical power of conservative and libertarian decontestations of responsibility, where personal

responsibility is taken as a primary goal for all individuals with no regard to background conditions.

He further explicitly links an American conception of liberty with the American values of "self-

reliance and self-improvement and risk-taking" and "drive, discipline, temperance, and hard work

[…] thrift and personal responsibility."[55] Here Obama invokes the language of Hayek and

Goldwater, speaking of responsibility in highly individualistic terms.

Obama's public discussions of race provide further evidence of his attempt to renegotiate

liberalism in terms of personal responsibility. At times, Obama is harshly critical of the racialized

language of responsibility that permeates discussions of African-American communities. He rejects

the idea that "race no longer matters—that the fight for equality has been won, or that the problems

that minorities face in this country today are largely self-inflicted" (232).[56] Yet, within the same book,

he repeats tropes of African-American sexual irresponsibility reminiscent of Reagan and Murray:

"the collapse of the two-parent black household […] a phenomenon that reflects a casualness

toward sex and child rearing among black men that renders black children more vulnerable—and for

which there is simply no excuse" (245).[57] Though critical of conservative and libertarian critiques of

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[54] *Ibid.*, 1. He continues: "And these values gave rise to the largest middle class and the strongest economy that the world has ever known." This has become a recurring trope for Obama. In a 2015 speech at Lehman College he states: "Because we believe in the idea that no matter who you are, no matter what you look like, no matter where you came from, no matter what your circumstances were, if you work hard, if you take responsibility, then America is a place where you can make something of your lives." Barack Hussein Obama, "Remarks Announcing the "My Brother's Keeper" Alliance at Lehman College in New York City, May 4, 2015," (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, 2015), 1.

[55] Obama, *Audacity of Hope*, 54.

[56]. He later writes, while discussing disparities in minority representation in Congress, "To suggest that our racial attitudes play no part in these disparities is to turn a blind eye to both our history and our experience—and to relieve ourselves of the responsibility to make things right" (233).

[57] He similarly contends that "many in the inner city are trapped by their own elf-destructive behaviors but that those behaviors are not innate" (255) and that previous welfare programs "by detaching income from work" eroded personal responsibility and "sapped people of their initiative and eroded their self-respect" (256).

irresponsibility in the African-American community, Obama makes strikingly similar arguments himself.

While there is reason to believe that some of this discourse reflects pragmatic political decisions to deracialize his presidency to avoid alienating white voters,[58] Obama invokes similar tropes when speaking to African-American audiences. During his commencement address at Morehouse College, a Historically Black College in Atlanta, he describes the importance of individual responsibility, reminding the graduates: "But along with collective responsibilities, we have individual responsibilities. There are some things, as Black men, we can only do for ourselves."[59] He then warns the graduates that "we've got no time for excuses," as racial discrimination and poverty do not excuse personal responsibility (4). Again, Obama seems to accept the decontestation of personal responsibility, while arguing for a supplementary account of collective responsibilities. However, he does not challenge personal responsibility, or significantly reshape the semantic field; the domain of collective responsibilities seems distinct from and subservient to the realm and value of personal responsibility.

Such speeches have been harshly criticized by Ta-Nehisi Coates, as moralizing sermons that depoliticize historical and structural racism. For Coates, while "The president is correct that there is a long history of black leaders addressing 'personal responsibility' […] as a diagnosis for what has

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[58] In a feature piece published following the 2016 election, Obama reflected on the difficulties of engaging questions of racial justice while in office: "'There are certain things we know,' he said. 'We know that when there is a conversation about the police and African-Americans, and conflict between those two, everybody goes to their respective corners. That is an area that just triggers the deepest stereotypes and assumptions – on both sides. […] If you don't stick your landing in talking about racial issues, particularly when it pertains to the criminal-justice system, then people just shut down. They don't listen.'" David Remnick, "It Happened Here," *New Yorker*, November 28, 2016, 63.

[59] Barack Hussein Obama, "Commencement Address at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, May 19, 2013," (Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, 2013), 3. When announcing his "My Brother's Keeper" Initiative, he repeats this argument: "And government and private sector and philanthropy and all the faith communities, we all have a responsibility to help provide you the tools you need. We've got to help you knock down some of the barriers that you experience. That's what we're here for. But you've got responsibilities too." *Ibid.*, "Remarks on 'My Brother's Keeper,'" 7.

historically gone wrong in black communities, the tradition is erroneous."[60] In Obama's strategy of

dividing up collective responsibilities of the government and personal responsibilities of African

Americans, Coates sees hypocrisy believing that history "will see a president who sought to hold

black people accountable for their communities, but was disdainful of those who looked at him and

sought the same. They will match his rhetoric of individual responsibility with the aggression the

administration showed to bail out the banks and the timidity it showed in addressing a foreclosure

crisis, which devastated black America (again)."[61] Again, the strategy of drawing on the language of

personal responsibility in defense of liberalism is beset by challenges, as it shifts the terms of debate,

precluding political responses that focus on systemic and structural effects. Personal deviancy and

irresponsibility remains the root of the problem.

Obama responded to Coates's criticism without apology contending that his speech reflects

his own experience growing up without a father,[62] and further warns against getting trapped in an

"either-or conversation" that distinguishes personal responsibility from government programs (14).

Obama's "both-and" approach does indeed complicate personal responsibility, supplementing the

libertarian and conservative ideological map with an account of governmental obligation. However,

it still treats irresponsibility as a social pathology particular to African-American communities, which

must be treated for any substantive progress to be made. In a 2007 speech commemorating the

Selma march, he calls for greater funding for education, but that African Americans must instill "a

sense in our young children that there is nothing to be ashamed about in educational achievement, I

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[60] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Champion Barack Obama," *The Atlantic* (2014),
http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/01/the-champion-barack-obama/283458/. Coates has also
criticized the President's analysis of African-American poverty as similar to Paul Ryan's; yet the President is not criticized
as vehemently. "The Secret Lives of Inner-City Black Males," *The Atlantic* (2014),
http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/03/the-secret-lives-of-inner-city-black-males/284454/.
[61] "How the Obama Administration Talks to Black America," *The Atlantic* (2013),
http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/05/how-the-obama-administration-talks-to-black-america/276015/.
[62] Obama, "Remarks at Catholic-Evangelical Leadership Summit," 13.

don't know who taught them that reading and writing and conjugating your verbs was something white." Similarly, he admonishes those who blame government failures for poverty for ignoring their own personal responsibilities: "We have too many children in poverty in this country and everybody should be ashamed, but don't tell me it doesn't have a little to do with the fact that we got too many daddies not acting like daddies."[63] Again, structural analysis is eschewed in favor of the personal; resentment against unjust structures is redirected towards the vulnerable themselves.

As Coates concludes a piece assessing Obama's response to his critique, "Asserting the moral faults of black people tend to gain votes. Asserting the moral fault of their government, not so much. […] What these people have never tired of hearing is another discourse on the lack of black morality or on the failings of black culture. It saddens me to see the president so sincerely oblige."[64] This, in essence, is the bind that contemporary liberalism finds itself in, having accepted the decontestation of personal responsibility. In a discursive environment where individuals are dislocated from historical, economic, and political contexts, poverty and other social problems must either be accounted for by personal failings of the poor or of the welfare state itself.[65] To defend itself with the inherited prioritization of personal responsibility, liberalism is forced to redirect blame and resentment away from itself. Once the *shibboleth* of personal responsibility is given, social programs that compliment, but do not challenge, personal responsibility can be advanced. Unable to challenge personal responsibility with a robust account of social responsibility, liberal actors are forced to defend their programs in language that risks recreating the same victim-blaming and

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[63] Barack Hussein Obama, "Remarks at the Selma Voting Rights March Commemoration in Selma Alabama, March 4, 2007," in *The American Presidency Project*, ed. Peters Gerhard and Wooley John T. (2007).
[64] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Color-Blind Policy, Color-Conscious Morality," *The Atlantic* (2015), http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/05/color-blind-policy-color-conscious-morality/393227/.
[65] Coates comes close to this admission: "I don't wish to minimize the difficulty, rhetorical and otherwise, of being the first black president of a congenitally racist country. In that business, Obama has gotten a lot right. But his "both/and" approach has been very wrong. One way around the conundrum is for the president to say as little as possible." Coates, "Color-blind Policy Color-Conscious Morality."

scapegoating rhetoric for which they criticize conservatives and libertarians. To defend liberalism, Clinton and Obama are forced to target the very vulnerable populations whom liberal politics should be defending.

IV- The Principles of "Ethical Individualism:" Philosophical Liberalism

One would expect philosophical liberalism, isolated from the pressures of policy making, to be able to free itself from dominant political discourse and thus offer a challenge to the hegemony of personal responsibility. Indeed, Samuel Scheffler argues that "according to the dominant philosophical defenses of liberalism that are current today, desert has no role whatsoever to play in the fundamental normative principles that apply to the basic social, political, and economic institutions of society."[66] For Scheffler, this fact is responsible for philosophical liberalism's inability to defend liberal politics against conservative critics. Unable to appeal to commonsense notions of personal responsibility and pre-institutional desert, because of a general commitment to naturalism, broadly understood, philosophical liberalism cannot defend itself on the same terms as its critics.[67]

Despite Scheffler's critique, this line of argument suggests that philosophical liberalism's indictment of desert should serve as a dissenting voice against the primacy of personal responsibility. In contrast, I argue that philosophical liberalism entrenches personal responsibility as an almost metaphysical assumption about human persons. Rather than diagnosing the absence of commonsense notions of personal responsibility as the source of philosophical liberalism's

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[66] Scheffler, "Responsibility, Reactive Attitudes, and Liberalism," 304.

[67] *Ibid.*, 309. Rawls believes that the two principles of justice result from looking "for a conception of justice that nullifies the accidents of natural endowment and the contingencies of social circumstance as counters in quest for political and economic advantage" and "express the result of leaving aside those aspects of the social world that seem arbitrary from a moral point of view." This challenges ideas of desert by contending that one's natural endowments and skills are just as morally arbitrary as the socio-economic status into which one is born. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 15. Dworkin similarly rejects strong claims of moral desert in distinguishes his account of equality of resources from arguments of "equality of opportunity," which critiques as bordering on incoherence as they insist equality at the "starting-gate" but celebrate inequality afterwards. For Dworkin, this distinction is arbitrary, and undercut the value of equality. Ronald Dworkin, "What Is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Resources," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 10, no. 4 (1981): 307-09.

impotence, it is precisely its failure to challenge these narratives that renders it ineffective at the level of political discourse and increasingly depoliticized at the level of theory.

Philosophical liberalism's prioritization of personal responsibility is most striking in its account of moral personhood. Taking the work of John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin as exemplars, individuals are treated in the abstract as rational and autonomous persons, rather than historically and socially situated agents. Such persons are defined as necessarily self-responsible. For Rawls, moral persons are individuals who, being free, equal, and rational, can "take responsibility for [their] ends, that is, that [they] can adjust [their] ends so that they can be pursued by the means [they] can reasonable expect to acquire given [their] prospects and situation in society."[68] Dworkin's position is more explicit. He defines the "second principle of ethical individualism" as a claim of personal responsibility: "though we must all recognize the equal objective importance of the success of a human life, one person has a special and final responsibility for that success—the person whose life it is."[69] This demands that "government work, again as far as it can achieve this, to make [individuals'] fates sensitive to the choices they have made."[70] Both, therefore, echo the ideological shift that implies that insofar as individuals are conceived of as free and rational, they must be held personally responsible.

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[68] John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical," ibid.14, no. 3 (1985): 244. Scheffler finds this unconvincing, viewing it as Rawls' justification that distributive questions should be focused on primary goods and that justice requires no accounting for expensive tastes. "Responsibility, Reactive Attitudes, and Liberalism," 320-321. Yet elsewhere, Rawls indicates that his conception of a person, even if political and not metaphysical, is "one that begins from our everyday conceptions of persons as the basic units of thought, deliberation and responsibility, and adapted to a political conception of justice." Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," 232 n.15. While Rawls's account of personal responsibility is clearly not the voluntarism of conservativism or libertarianism, he conceives of persons as fundamentally responsible for the choices they make, and willing and able to adjust their values and desires in light of different institutional contexts.

[69] Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 5.

[70] Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, 6. This was written after Scheffer's article, yet this book is a collection and defense of his account of equality as developed in his two articles in the 1980s: "What Is Equality? Part 1: Equality of Welfare," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 10, no. 3 (1981). and Dworkin, "Equality of Resources." See: *Sovereign Virtue*, 7.

Similarly, both Rawls and Dworkin argue for distributive justice in the terms of personal responsibility. While Rawls' "veil of ignorance" attempts to neutralize the effects of circumstances beyond an agent's control seemingly correcting for the effects of socio-economic structures, he insists on the ability to separate individuals from the contingencies of social and natural endowment.[71] In crafting principles of justice that would eliminate the harmful effects of morally arbitrary accidents, Rawls claims to challenge the logic of moral desert. However, this ultimately performs a division between acceptable inequalities, generated by individual choices, and unacceptable inequalities, generated by arbitrary contingencies. Personal responsibility is retained as a chief value for adjudicating outcomes.

Dworkin's position reveals this same logic more explicitly. He establishes a distinction between inequalities in resources that are the result of actions that are choice sensitive and those caused by "brute luck." This is necessary, because Dworkin contends that individuals should be held responsible for the outcomes of their choices, while the state should provide redress to compensate for bad luck.[72] Dworkin's means of distinguishing the two relies upon a hypothetical insurance market in which individuals insure themselves against bad luck:

> Suppose an imaginary world in which, thought he distribution of skills over the community were in the aggregate what it actually is, people for some reason all had the same antecedent chance of suffering the consequences of lacking any particular set of these skills, and were all in a position to buy insurance against these consequences at the same premium structure. How much insurance would each buy at what cost? If we can make sense of that question, and answer it even by fixing rough lower limits on average, then we shall have a device for fixing at least the lower bounds of a tax-and-redistribution program satisfying the demands of equality of resources" (315).

This strategy is part of Dworkin's attempt to show that egalitarianism need not violate the principle of personal responsibility that he enshrines as a core component of ethical individualism. However,

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[71] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 19.
[72] Dworkin, "Equality of Resources," 293.

the language of "bad luck" depoliticizes a set of social, economic, and political structures that generate outcome. While being born into poverty or with a physical or mental disability is not choice-sensitive, it is a misnomer to simply treat these as bad luck. Doing so treats economic outcomes or society's lack of accessibility as natural or random outcomes instead of the result of political decisions, economic forces, and social values. As Young argues, "this formulation inappropriately collapses the idea of injustice with the idea of undeserved fate. The idea of injustice is not identical to the idea of undeserved misfortune."[73] By maintaining the value of personal responsibility, Dworkin is able to conceptualize structural injustice little better than Hayek.

The abstractions of liberal political philosophy, over which communitarian critics and liberal defenders have spilt much ink,[74] can be better understood in this light. In liberal philosophy, historical and political contexts drop out of discussion, as personal responsibility is further emphasized. Instead of a self that is shaped and bound by history, this self is ultimately fully responsible for oneself and able to choose one's own values, make one's own choices, and bear the costs of these choices, once appropriately just institutions are constructed. Hence, justice means that individuals can choose, act, and, importantly, be responsible for their choices and actions. Additionally, philosophical liberalism's prioritization of neutrality, which undergirds both Rawls's "facts of pluralism,"[75] and Dworkin's insistence that political decisions be made independent of

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[73] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 32.

[74] Such debates are beyond the scope of this chapter. For a summary of the communitarian criticism see: Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism," *Political Theory* 18, no. 1 (1990). Will Kymlicka provides a defense of liberalism against communitarianism, particularly against the charge that liberalism posits an unrealistic and abstract account of the self in: Will Kymlicka, "Liberalism and Communitarianism," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 18, no. 2 (1988). Ultimately, this debate is of less interest to me, as I am persuaded by the criticism that both sides displace political questions by transcendentalizing either an unencumbered self or the traditions of a community. See: John R. Wallach, "Liberals, Communitarians, and the Tasks of Political Theory," *Political Theory* 15, no. 4 (1987); Mary G. Dietz, "Merely Combating the Phrases of This World," ibid.26, no. 1 (1998).

[75] Rawls defines these as "a diversity of general and comprehensive doctrines" and "the plurality of conflicting, and indeed incommensurable, conceptions of the meaning, value and purpose of human life." John Rawls, "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 7, no. 1 (1987): 4.

particular views of the good,[76] relies on a corollary of personal responsibility. Institutional

indifference entails that individuals can and must be held accountable for all consequences of their

choices in pursuit of the good. Failure to do so would violate liberal neutrality.[77]

Despite explicit commitments to redistribution and equality, philosophical liberalism

reproduces the pathologies of personal responsibility. Abstracting individuals outside of social

contexts reframes the question of justice in terms of distribution of resources and compensating for

undeserved outcomes. Social structures are treated as given or beyond explicit contestation. This

conception, as Elizabeth S. Anderson argues, loses focus of the political claims of justice and

equality. "The proper negative aim of egalitarian justice is not to eliminate the impact of brute luck,"

she writes, "but to end oppression, which by definition is socially imposed. Its proper positive aim is

not to ensure that everyone gets what they morally deserve but to create a community in which

people stand in relations of equality to others."[78] Again, unjust socio-economic systems of

production and consumption are insulated from systematic critique; redistribution functions almost

as a means of buying off criticism by compensating those who lose the most in the existing

distribution.

Second, ascriptions of responsibility are intensified towards individuals, as the goal of

redistribution is to ensure that individuals are able to take responsibility for their own life choices

independent of luck. As Dworkin writes, "We have already decided that people should pay the price

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[76] Ronald Dworkin, "Liberalism," in *A Matter of Principle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 191-92.
[77] See: Dworkin, "Liberalism," 193-195. Freeden argues that the combination of the emphasis on neutrality and abstract theory has "emaciated liberalism by relegating its comprehensive values to the status of equal contenders with other socio-political doctrines, thus undercutting the specific ideological appeal of liberalism that its other proponents have been so eager to advance." Michael Freeden, *Liberal Languages: Ideological Imaginations and Twentieth-Century Progressive Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 37.
[78] Elizabeth S. Anderson, "What Is the Point of Equality," *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (1999): 288-89. This line of argument is extensively developed in Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Paperback ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [1990] 2011), 15-38. See also: Wallach, "Tasks of Political Theory, 589: philosophical liberalism operates "at the static level of *distribution*, allowing the effects of the past on the dynamic level of *production* to remain for the most part untouched because they constitute 'contingencies.'"

of the life they have decided to lead, measured in what others give up in order that they can do so."[79]

This language – "people should pay the price" – as well as Dworkin's frequent discussion of equality

passing the "envy test," suggests the movement of resentment underpinning this account of

responsibility (285). After granting insurance against brute luck, irresponsible behavior must be

punished, or else claims for equal distribution of resources will generate envy. Furthermore, those

who are compensated for the ills of brute luck are treated with pity, if not scorn, rather than as full

participants in society. Within this system, as Anderson contends, "People lay claim to the resources

of egalitarian redistribution in virtue of their inferiority on others, not in virtue of their equality to

others. Pity is incompatible with respecting the dignity of others."[80] Thus rather than challenging

moralistic ascriptions of responsibility, it ultimately intensifies them.

V- The Tenacity of Responsibility: The Turn to Ethics

Narratives of personal responsibility have not gone without critique. Theorists, social

scientists, and commentators have challenged both the philosophical underpinnings of these tropes

as well as the political consequences. These critiques inform my own account of the two pathologies

of personal responsibility. However, they have been unable to fundamentally alter the discursive

environment and dislodge the dominance of personal responsibility. This does not discount their

contributions, but testifies to the tenacity of these tropes and the difficulty of theorizing

responsibility outside of personalized terms. To further demonstrate this point, I turn to the work of

Butler and Connolly. In addition to their strong critiques of personal responsibility, both defend

alternative conceptions of responsibility grounded on interconnectedness, vulnerability, and

generosity instead of individualism, autonomy, and rationality. Articulating a series of ethical

practices and political sensibilities aimed to both temper resentful ascriptions of responsibility and

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[79] Dworkin, "Equality of Resources," 292.
[80] Anderson, "What is the Point of Equality," 306.

mobilize democratic politics, both, however treat the self, though radically reconceived, as the primary subject and object of responsibility. As my own project is indebted to their critiques and reorientations of responsibility, this critique does not suggest an equivalence between their politics and Hayek's, Goldwater's, or philosophical liberalism's. Instead, I treat the persistence of personal responsibility as further proof of its ubiquity.

Both Connolly's critique and reconceptualization of responsibility are situated within his broader project of diagnosing the sources and effects of resentment against the human condition. While he progressively deepens this account throughout his writings, Connolly contends that resentment springs up from aspects of the human condition that confound human attempts at certainty, mastery, and universality. These include the co-constitution of identity and difference,[81] the contingency and breakdown of traditional forms of attachment and authority,[82] the intransigence of religious faith and belief against secular rationalism,[83] the complexity and disruption of affective responses,[84] the interaction between different temporal processes and forces,[85] and the fragility of self-organizing natural and social processes.[86] In all of these, humans are confronted with a world that is never "exhausted by a single perspective or constellation of contending perspectives [and] is always richer than the systems through which we comprehend and organize it."[87]

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[81] Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, 64-68

[82] Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 1-40

[83] William E. Connolly, *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 19-46.

[84] *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

[85] Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 17-42.

[86] William E. Connolly, *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 6-11.. This brief survey is not intended to be exhaustive in either breadth or depth of Connolly's thinking, but to suggest the different elements he identifies that challenge assurances about the self's identity, knowledge, and place in the world.

[87] Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, 32-33. In a later work, Connolly describes the "human predicament" as follows: "our predicament involves how to negotiate life, without hubris or existential resentment, in a world that is neither providential nor susceptible to consummate mastery. We must explore how to invest existential affirmation in such a world, even as we strive to fend off its worst dangers." Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 98.

This confrontation with a protean world of becoming calls into question an individual's certainty and sense of self, which, if one is unprepared for this revelation, can generate and fuel resentment against these disruptions. Connolly locates moralized ascriptions of responsibility as defense mechanisms against this generalized resentment:

> People tend to demand, to put it all too briefly, a world in which suffering is ultimately grounded in proportional responsibility. We resent a world in which it appears that this is not so. But resentment must locate an appropriate object if it is to be discharged as resentment. It thereby seeks a responsible agent that it can convince itself is worthy of receiving the load of incipient resentment it carries. Otherwise its existential rancor must be stored or translated into something else. So, part of the drive to insistent attributions of responsibility flows from existential resentment.[88]

This creates what Connolly calls a "second problem of evil," or the ways in which attempts to resolve the problem of evil – by identifying a responsible agent for every instance of suffering – in turn generate suffering and evil (8). Anything that challenges the universality or naturalness dominant norms of behavior or form of life becomes a "natural defect in need of conquest or conversion, punishment or love" (80). Connolly traces these flows of resentment at work in the criminal justice system,[89] debates over the war on drugs,[90] and varieties of political and religious fundamentalisms.[91] Thus Connolly's analysis valuable identifies resentment against the human condition as part of the affective economy that generates pathological ascriptions of responsibility.

Recognizing that "we are not predesigned to be responsible agents, but we cannot dispense with practices of responsibility," Connolly seeks to articulate a "political theory of responsibility" that honors this gap.[92] The goal is to temper resentment, and thus vengeful ascriptions of responsibility, by problematizing the assumed justifications for responsibility. "The task here is to

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[88] Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, 121.
[89] Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 41-74
[90] Connolly, *Why I am not a Secularist*, 122-133.
[91] Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 105-134.
[92] Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, 116. See also: 33-34.

readjust the Kantian and neo-Kantian balance between attributions of responsibility to self or others for wrongs committed and the cultivation of *presumptive responsiveness* to beings and processes whose ways are not yet so discernable to you."[93] Connolly, thus proposes an *ethos* of "critical responsiveness," which encourages an active encouragement of difference in ways that require modification of one's own attachments and sense of self.[94] It aims not merely to expand the existing terms of political recognition, but invites contestation of these very terms themselves through encounters with different identities.[95]

Reorienting responsibility as an *ethos* of critical responsiveness aims to reanimate "positive pluralist assemblage."[96] Through what he calls "role experimentation" (182-190) and "democratic militancy" (194-195), those espousing the *ethos* of critical responsiveness are better prepared to engage in political activism and respond generously to the political challenges plaguing late modern democracies, from climate change to economic inequality. Connolly thus endorses a participatory politics, in which citizens simultaneously work upon themselves to temper their own resentment while forming local, national, and global movements to contest systems of power feed on resentment to justify exploitation of both the environment and vulnerable populations. He thus calls for both a series of interim actions[97] and "cross-state citizen fermentation" whose "overriding goal is to press international organizations, states, corporations, banks, labor unions, churches, consumers, citizens, and universities to act in concerted ways to defeat neoliberalism, to curtail climate change,

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[93] Connolly, *Fragility of Things*, 135.
[94] For a critical appraisal of Connolly's project, see: Stephen K White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Chapter 5.
[95] See: Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, xvi-xviii.
[96] Connolly, *Fragility of Things*, 179.
[97] These include: 1) challenging the hegemony of neoliberal thinking; 2) experimenting with new media forms, consumption patterns, and investment strategies; 3) reforming the state-supported infrastructure of unsustainable consumption; 4) engaging in activism inside faith communities and secular institutions that fuel resentment and justify existing practices; 5) challenging the special entitlements retained by the united states; 6) actively engaging the democratic state; and 7) building alliances between religious and nontheistic communities around areas of shared concern. Connolly, *The Fragility of Things*, 36-41.

to reduce inequality, and to instill a vibrant pluralist spirituality into democratic machines that have lost too much of their vitality."[98]

That Connolly's political commitments are progressive and emancipatory are not in doubt. However, his account of the practices of the self through which critical responsiveness is cultivated demonstrate the tenacity of personal responsibility. To temper the flows of resentment, Connolly recommends micropolitical work as a means to "appreciate creative possibilities that the contingency of being opens up" without defaulting on an understanding of identity as inherent or voluntary. He continues:

> The Nietzschean/Foucauldian conception of the self as a contingent formation modestly open to further strategies of craftsmanship authorizes the practice of self as "work of art." Here the mature self works experimentally and cautiously upon itself and the relationships through which it is constituted. It patiently applies tactics to itself to modify itself, prying open thereby some creative distance between itself and the institutional disciplines of normalization. Some of these tactics are explicit and conscious. When they do their work they may render the self more available for additional work that exceeds the reach of the intentional technology. Your dreams change. Your feelings acquire new valences. Your sensibility becomes modified in unexpected ways. You then reappraise what is happening from the vantage point of the aspirations that launched the effort, and you reconsider those aspirations from the vantage point of these shifts in sensibility.[99]

I quote this passage at length both because Connolly describes this as a process to "recover a modified conception of the responsible self" (69), but also because it demonstrates the centrality of the self in this political vision. Connolly calls upon individuals to take responsibility for themselves, not as autonomous unified agents, but as a project to be completed. Or, as Ella Myers puts it, "the individual self is both the subject and object of ethical action." [100] Thus, Connolly does not eliminate personal responsibility, but reconfigures it.

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[98] *Ibid.*, 194-195.
[99] Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, 69.
[100] Ella Myers, *Worldly Ethics: Democratic Politics and Care for the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 45.

While not problematic in itself, the danger is that self-care becomes an end in itself at the expense of structural change.[101] Connolly is explicit that ethical practices of the self and formal political reform "presuppose each other," but also suggests that the former "has become a *condition*" for the latter.[102] However, this places a significant burden on individuals, especially as existing social and economic structures systematically distribute resources – material, temporal, and cultural – differentially. As Moya Lloyd argues, through a reading of Audre Lorde, "racializing norms work restrictively to underwrite who is capable of ethical work on themselves. To date, in America, for Lorde, this has meant white people not Black."[103] Failing to attend to these structures of exclusion risks limiting both the effectiveness of Connolly's *ethos* and the breadth of those able to perform it.

Furthermore, when detached from political action, practices of the self can become a therapeutic regime that resigns itself to, rather than challenges, dominant neoliberal culture. Connolly's litanies of such practices – including everything from supporting slow-food movements, buying hybrid vehicles, and writing a blog, to attending religious services with which one is unfamiliar, supporting divestment initiatives, and watching foreign films[104] – are difficult to distinguish in themselves from the increasingly subject-oriented practices of neoliberal governmentality, which construct "a subject and a conscience, a self that believes in its specific

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[101] Hence several commentators critique Connolly for ignoring the structural and institutional site of ethical and political action. See: Alexander Livingston, "Avoiding Deliberative Democrac?: Micropolitics, Manipulation, and the Public Sphere," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 45, no. 3 (2012); Clive Barnett, "Political Affects in Public Space: Normative Blind-Spots in Non-Representational Ontologies," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33, no. 2 (2008). Similarly, others argue that without an explicit theory of justice, these ethical practices cannot animate political action. See: Stephen K White, "'Critical Responsiveness' and Justice," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 24, no. 1 (1998); J. Donald Moon, "Engaging Plurality: Reflections on *the Ethos of Pluralization*," ibid. Frederick M. Dolan, "Paradoxical Responsiveness," ibid.: 87-88. White's, Moon's, and Dolan's articles appeared in a symposium that Connolly himself responds to. See: William E. Connolly, "Rethinking *the Ethos of Pluralization*," ibid.

[102] Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 73.

[103] Moya Lloyd, "Hate, Loathing and Political Theory: Thinking with and against William Connolly," in *Democracy and Pluralism: The Political Thought of William E. Connolly*, ed. Alan Finlayson (New York: Routledge), 123. Lloyd's critique is generous, and not dismissive, as her concern is to theorize ways in which those excluded from both the opportunities to work on themselves and norms of recognition can still become active democratic subjects.

[104] For an example of one such litany, see: *The Fragility of Things*, 187.

individuality and that stands as guarantor of its actions, its way of life (and not only employment) and takes responsibility for them."[105] Flexibility, innovation, and creativity have all become forms of human capitalization in an economy that provides less and less job security and relies on more and more contingent labor. While Connolly's argument for tempering the resentment that these developments create, lest they become manipulated and directed against the most vulnerable, is undoubtedly important, there is also the risk that these strategies will generate acquiescence. These challenges demonstrate the pervasiveness of personal responsibility, and how difficult it is to imagine alternative theoretical possibilities.

Similarly, in recent work, Judith Butler explicitly attempts to recover a form of responsibility that challenges neoliberal practices of "responsibilization."[106] Building on her earlier work on subjectivity, her recent writings attempt to find "a language to describe the situation of being impinged upon by norms, but also by the ethical claims of others, at the same time that one accounts for responsiveness, if not responsibility."[107] Drawing upon Nietzsche, psychoanalysis, and post-structuralism, Butler describes subjectivity as "the paradoxical effect of a regime of power in which the very 'conditions of existence,' the possibility of continuing as a recognizable social being, requires the formation and maintenance of the subject in subordination."[108] From this conception of subjectivity, Butler offers an account of responsibility grounded not on autonomy, but on dependence and vulnerability.

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[105] Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012), 134. Lazzarato continues: "The techniques used in the individual interviews, which intrude on one's private life, that which is most subjective, push the welfare recipient to examine his life, his plans, and their validity." See also Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 131-134.

[106] Butler, *Frames of War*, 35.

[107] Thomas Dumm and Judith Butler, "Giving Away, Giving Over: A Conversation with Judith Butler," *The Massachusetts Review* 49, no. 1/2 (2008): 97.

[108] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 27.. For Butler, the subject is constituted not only through violent imposition of norms, but also through the subject's "passionate attachment to subjection," in her desire to remain recognizable as a social being (66-67). The continual reiteration of these practices, however, open possibilities for resistance and subversion because the subject remains incoherent or incomplete (99).

This revisionary account of responsibility relies on Butler's own critique of the sovereign subject who is in full possession of itself able to speak and act for herself. Instead, Butler argues that "the subject is the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency. No individual becomes a subject without first becoming subjected or undergoing 'subjectivation'" (11). Individuals do not exist prior to regimes of power and social norms of legibility. Instead, they become subjects through social practices that render them legible and intelligible as subjects; social norms frame what types of beings and lives are allowed to appear as human persons, thus deserving social regard.[109] Subjects are therefore called into being through social processes of interpolation: social actors and norms demand that individuals give an account of themselves. Individuals are constantly confronted by others who demand: "Who are you?" By responding to this address, subjects interpret themselves through dominant norms to become legible to others and appear as persons.[110]

Butler thus conceives of responsibility and social ontology as co-constitutive. Individuals exist only by accounting for themselves within the terms of social norms in response to another person's demand. The capacities to answer this address, recalling the etymology of responsibility discussed in Chapter 1, are inherently social and not individual. Despite being called to account for themselves, the social constitution of subjects entails that they are never in full control of the life they are accounting for. It is precisely from this point, that Butler works to renegotiate responsibility: "our political and ethical responsibilities are rooted in the recognition that radical forms of self-sufficiency and unbridled sovereignty are, by definition, disrupted by the larger global processes of

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[109] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6-7 and *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 7-9. See also: White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, 77-81.

[110] Butler, *Account of Oneself*, 10-19, 30-34. Butler insists that this account is always both opaque and incomplete: "My account of myself is partial, haunted by that for which I can devise no definitive story. I cannot explain exactly why I have emerged in this way, and my efforts at narrative reconstruction are always undergoing revision" (40). See also: White, *Sustaining Affirmation*, 82.

which they are a part, that no final control can be secured, and that final control is not, cannot be, an ultimate value."[111]

To this end, Butler "ambivalently" turns to more "ethical" sources, including the work of Emmanuel Levinas.[112] For Levinas, the Other "makes its demand on me, but it is also of me: it is the constitutive relation of this subject to the ethical […that] establishes this nonunitary subject as the basis for ethical responsibility."[113] Just as one's being as a subject is achieved through the subjection by another, "my openness to the Other is what allows for the wound and what also at the same time commands that I take responsibility for the Other" (19). Therefore, for Butler, that an individual can never extricate herself from social relations does not annul responsibility but instead "forms the horizon of choice, and it grounds our responsibility" such that "we are not responsible for it, but it creates the conditions under which we assume responsibility."[114]

Precisely because humans are socially constituted and necessarily entangled with others, they are responsible; because individuals are "from the start, dependent on a world of others," they bear responsibility for the lives others.[115] Yet this entanglement with others entails that human life is fundamentally precarious, as it is impossible to wall oneself off from the potential of harm. Susceptibility serves as a constant occasion to both harm and be harmed, and simultaneously makes ethical relationships possible. Again, drawing on Levinas, "We are, despite ourselves, open to this imposition, and though it overrides our will, it shows us that the claims that others make upon us are

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[111] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), xiii.

[112] "When I first encountered this position [Levinas'], I ran in the opposite direction, understanding it as valorization of self-sacrifice that would make excellent material for a Nietzschean psychological critique." "Ethical Ambivalence," in *The Turn to Ethics*, ed. Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz (New York: Routledge, 2000), 19. See also: Judith Butler and William E Connolly, "Politics, Power and Ethics: A Discussion between Judith Butler and William Connolly," *Theory & Event* 4, no. 2 (2000): §10.

[113] Butler, "Ethical Ambivalence," 18.

[114] Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 101. See also: "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2012): 142. and Dumm and Butler, "Giving Away, Giving Over," 102.

[115] Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," 141. See also: Lavin, *Politics of Responsibility*, 46-47.

part of our very sensibility, our receptivity, and our answerability. […] ethical obligation not only depends upon our vulnerability to the claims of others but establishes us as creatures who are fundamentally defined by that ethical relation."[116] Responsibility, then, is not based on a free will, but instead is possible due to the unwilled aspects of human existence.

This alternative meaning of responsibility entails a set of critical practices. While vulnerability and precarity serve as social-ontological conditions, one's ability to respond to the solicitude of the Other is mediated by regimes of apprehension and intelligibility.[117] Vulnerability is differentially distributed around the world, with some populations being systematically more precarious than others, and our ability to apprehend these lives as lives at all is manipulated and distorted by frames of perception. Without apprehending another's suffering as a human life to be grieved, one cannot respond ethically at all.[118] Therefore, responsibility involves both practices of critical reflection "on those exclusionary norms by which fields of recognizability are constituted," and responding solicitously to the face of the suffering Other (36).

Butler's social ontology further shifts the object of responsibility away from individuals. In *Frames of War*, she writes that the ground of responsibility lies "outside ourselves, on others, on institutions, and on sustained and sustainable environments," such that our obligations are not towards individual lives, or life itself, but on sustaining conditions, which "are both our political responsibility and the matter of our most vexed ethical decisions."[119] Responding to the dilemmas of

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[116] Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," 141.

[117] Butler, *Frames of War*, 6-7.

[118] *Ibid.*, 12-13.

[119] Butler, *Frames of War*, 23. This is grounded explicitly on her social ontology: "There is no life without the conditions of life that variably sustain life, and those conditions are pervasively social, establishing not the discrete ontology of the person, but rather the interdependency of persons, involving reproducible and sustaining social relations, and relations to the environment and to non-human forms of life, broadly considered […] The question is not whether a given being is living or not, nor whether the being in question has the status of a 'person'; it is, rather, whether the social conditions of persistence and flourishing are or are not possible" (19-20). Similarly, she supplements her Levinassian account by turning to the work of Arendt to argue that "we must devise institutions and policies that actively preserve and affirm the nonchosen character of open-ended and plural cohabitation." Butler, "Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation," 144.

differentially distributed intelligibility and vulnerability requires not only critical work on

exclusionary norms, but ensuring egalitarian material and institutional conditions for life. For Butler,

this implies "positive obligations" to provide egalitarian support in terms of: "food, shelter, work,

medical care, education, rights of mobility and expression, protection against injury and

oppression."[120] Thus, Butler's account appears to significantly challenge individualistic narratives of

responsibility.

Despite these political claims, however, the account of responsiveness that animates Butler's

conception of responsibility prioritizes the self as responding to the address of the Other. Echoing

critiques of Connolly, many critics contend this implies political action for ethical practices.[121]

Despite undermining the ontological assumptions of dominant conceptions of personal

responsibility, it resurfaces in a different form as subject individuated through the demand of the

Other. The Levinassian roots of this account ultimately reinforce the individual subject as one

uniquely called to account for him or herself. As François Raffoul contends: "Levinas thus

reinforces the position of ground of the *subjectum*, now rethought in terms of the accusation and

passivity of the subject, as the persecuted subject of responsibility."[122] In a strange way, Butler's

account intensifies personal responsibility as an impossible and infinite demand to respond. In being

summoned, the individual becomes isolated and vulnerable as the one who must respond to the

demand of the other. This risks abstracting responsiveness away from the specific sites of power

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[120] Butler, *Frames of War*, 22.

[121] See for example: Jodi Dean, "The Politics of Avoidance: The Limits of Weak Ontology," *The Hedgehog Review* 7, no. 2 (2005); "Change of Address: Butler's Ethics at Sovereignty's Deadlock," in *Judith Butler's Precarious Politics: Critical Encounters*, ed. Terrell Carver and Samuel A. Chambers (New York: Routledge, 2008); Catherine Mills, "Normative Violence, Vulnerability, and Responsibility," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2 (2007). For defenses of Butler's critical politics see: Fiona Jenkins, "Toward a Nonviolent Ethics: Response to Catherine Mills," ibid.; Sara Rushing, "Preparing for Politics: Judith Butler's Ethical Dispositions," *Contemporary Political Theory* 9, no. 3 (2010).

[122] François Raffoul, *The Origins of Responsibility* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 214.

that Butler herself attends to, becoming a universal responsibility to precarious lives obscuring the political construction of suffering.[123]

Butler surely complicates this picture of hyperbolic personal responsibility, drawing on Nietzsche, Foucault, Adorno, and Althusser among others to move beyond Levinas's apolitical dyadic encounter. Therefore, she insists that "our responsibility is not just for the purity of our souls but for the shape of the collectively inhabited world. This means that action has to be understood as consequential."[124] However, this account of an explicitly political responsibility is not only significantly less developed than her account of ethical responsiveness, but it sits uneasily with it. The face of the Other, that which interrupts ordinary life and demands response, requires an attunement "to be awake to what is precarious in another life or, rather, the precariousness of life itself."[125] This demand suggests a moral absolute – specially "thou shall not kill – that stands in tension with both an attention to political consequences and Butler's own focus on the social conditions of life.[126] This tension and the political theoretical challenges it generates further testify to the difficulty of fully extracting responsibility from its personalized decontestation. This is not to suggest a complementarity between Butler and Hayek but to demonstrate the tenacity of personalized framings of responsibility.

Both Connolly and Butler offer trenchant critiques of moralized narratives of personal responsibility and valuable theoretical insights for theorizing alternative conceptions of

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[123] Hence the line of critique of Butler for creating a "new humanism" on the bases of universal vulnerability. See: Ann V. Murphy, "Corporeal Vulnerability and the New Humanism," *Hypatia* 26, no. 3 (2011); Antonio Y. Vásquez-Arroyo, "Responsibility, Violence, and Catastrophe," *Constellations* 15, no. 1 (2008); Bonnie Honig, "Antigone's Two Laws: Greek Tragedy and the Politics of Humanism," *New Literary History* 41, no. 1 (2010).

[124] Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 110.

[125] Butler, *Precarious Life*, 134.

[126] Myers provocatively suggests that, in light of this tension, "one might want to consider why the notion of an ethical imperative beyond politics holds such appeal, even for a thinker like Butler, who is otherwise so attuned to the workings of power and to the importance of democratic contestation at reshaping power relations." Myers, *Worldly Ethics*, 81-82. On the tension between Butler's ethics and her politics see also: Vázquez-Arroyo, *Political Responsibility*, 160-177.

responsibility, many of which are mobilized in the subsequent two chapters. The persistence, albeit

in reconfigured forms, of the personal in both of these critical interventions further demonstrates

how pervasively these narratives have structured political thinking and imagination. My readings of

Connolly and Butler further demonstrate the value of turning to Nietzsche's thought. Both take

seriously Nietzsche's assertion that "false values cannot be eradicated by reasons […] One must

grasp the need for their existence: they are a consequence of causes which have nothing to do with

reasons" (*WP*: 262), and explicitly draw upon Nietzsche's critique of moral responsibility in their

critiques of responsibility. As will become more explicit in the next chapter, both Connolly's

account of resentment and Butler's account of internalized guilt draw from Nietzsche's own analysis

of responsibility. While both stop short of fully utilizing the resources of Nietzsche's thought for

theorizing responsibility, their initial moves inspire my own turn to his thought in the next chapter.

VI-A Path Not Taken: Progressive Social Responsibility

The foregoing analysis of narratives of personal responsibility in American political thought

and discourse might suggest that that this mode of thinking is inherent to American political culture.

Conservative writers have long argued as such, contending that personal responsibility is enshrined

in the heart of American political thought and practice, pointing to the phrase's appearance in *The

Federalist*.[127] Such a reading draws straight lines from America's "liberal" founding, through the

Jacksonian era, and Emerson's conception of "self-reliance," to contemporary "neoliberal"

discourses of personal responsibility. It is tempting to provide a Hartzian narrative of American

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[127] For example, see: Prager, "The American Tradition of Personal Responsibility." The phrase "personal responsibility" appears twice in *The Federalist*. In LXIII, Madison uses the phrase in justification of the Senate's relative permanence of the Senate as compared to the House of Representatives, as it is difficult to "preserve a personal responsibility in the members of a *numerous* body," such as the House. See: Hamilton, et al., *Federalist Papers*, LXIII, pg. 382. The second invocation is in Hamilton's discussion of the limitations to executive power, and the power to hold the executive accountable through the power of impeachment in LXIX (pg. 414-415). The phrase "personally responsible" occurs once, in XLL, where Hamilton defends the unitary executive as crucial for maintaining accountability to the people (pg. 428). In all cases, however, personal responsibility refers to individuals in places of delegated authority and not to the individual moral virtues of citizens or to merit or desert.

political culture, by treating personal responsibility as an inherently liberal conception of

responsibility, as Chad Lavin does.[128] While this simplistic reading of American political thought has

been subjected to significant scrutiny, [129] my account of the decontestation of responsibility across

the political spectrum seems to provide some evidence for it. The ubiquity of personal responsibility

may suggest that it is a universal and unifying American value. However, there was nothing natural

or inevitable about this discursive settlement; it was a political victory over competing interpretations

of responsibility.

During the early twentieth-century a vibrant counter-discourse within American liberalism

contested the tropes of personal responsibility and argued for a robust conception of social

responsibility. Echoing and influenced by British "New Liberalism," progressive thinkers attempted

to shift the terrain of liberal discourse from an emphasis on individualism to one of sociality.[130]

Despite Freeden's assertion that American political discourse foregrounds "individualistic rather

than communitarian idea-environment […] promising reward for merit and unequal results,"[131] the

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[128] Chad Lavin discusses personal responsibility as "liberal responsibility," basing his identification on the priority of autonomy in liberal thinking. Lavin, *The Politics of Responsibility*, 7. Similarly, Alan Ryan includes "the responsibility of individuals for their own fates," in his account of classical liberalism's self-definition. Alan Ryan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 24. Such a reading is not unwarranted, given J. S. Mill's discussion of personal responsibility in *On Liberty*. Mill, *On Liberty*, 104. However, as Freeden has shown responsibility in classical liberal thinking is much less bout individual desert. Instead, "a diffused, responsible, and limited use of political power is the chief institutional corollary of liberty." Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 153. This also best accords with the use of the term in *The Federalist*. On this question see also: Ryan, *Making of Modern Liberalism*, 30 and Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 14.

[129] As many have shown, the thesis that America is fundamentally a liberal nation both ignores the multiple strains of American inegalitarian ideology and hierarchical institutions and is itself an ideological construct of the Cold War. On the former see: Judith N. Shklar, "Redeeming American Political Theory," *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991). and Rogers M Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America," ibid.87, no. 3 (1993). On the latter see: John G. Gunnell, "The Archaeology of American Liberalism," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 6, no. 2 (2001); Duncan Bell, "What Is Liberalism?," *Political Theory* 42, no. 6 (2014).

[130] T.H. Green, L.T. Hobhouse, and J.A. Hobson are characteristic of the move in Britain. According to Freeden, for these thinkers the relatively embryonic, though nevertheless central, liberal concept of sociability was available in a form capable of redirection towards budding notions of interdependence and community." Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 180. Responding to the social costs of industrialism (194) and drawing upon evolutionary biology (199), New Liberalism incorporated a "graduate depersonalization of responsibility for social and economic evils" (200). See also: Freeden, *Liberal Languages*; Fawcett, *Liberalism*, 186-189; and Ryan, *Making of Modern Liberalism*,

[131] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 244.

early twentieth century witnessed significant critiques of overly individualistic accounts of responsibility. Herbert Croly's 1909, *The Promise of American Life*, offers a striking example. Croly argues that traditional American values needed to be reformulated to secure the "American Promise" of individual emancipation in light of the twentieth-century's changing economic and political conditions in the twentieth century. In light of the Panic of 1907, he observed the decline of "easy, generous, and irresponsible optimism" in American culture,[132] and a growing sentiment among "the discontented poor" that poverty was the result of "an unjust political and economic organization" (20).[133]

Croly therefore called for a shift in American political values from a "maximum amount of economic freedom" and the "abundant satisfaction of individual desires" to "a certain measure of discipline" and "individual subordination and self-denial."[134] Eschewing purely individualistic interpretations of American political culture, Croly defined liberty and progress as social in nature through the construction of a coherent national purpose.

> This entailed interpreting responsibility in social and political, instead of individual and moral, terms. This interpretation emerges in his critique of the concentration of economic power at the turn of the century: The existing concentration of wealth and financial power in the hands of a few irresponsible men is the inevitable outcome of the chaotic individualism of our political and economic organization, while at the same time it is inimical to democracy, because it tends to erect political abuses and social inequalities into a system. The interference which follows may be disagreeable, but it is not to be escaped. In becoming responsible for the subordination of the individual to the demand of a dominant and constructive national purpose, the American state will in effect be making itself responsible for a morally and socially desirable distribution of wealth (23).

Several points are important in this passage. First, Croly charges individualism of *laissez-faire* liberalism as inherently irresponsible. An effective account of responsibility cannot be grounded, in

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[132] Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1909]1965), 7.

[133] See also Fawcett, *Liberalism*, 190-191 and Ryan, *Making of Modern Liberalism*, 477.

[134] Croly, *Promise of American Life*, 22.

Croly's view, on an individualism that admits of no interference of social and political institutions.

Second, democracy requires that the state take on new responsibilities for ensuring a just distribution

of resources. Here responsible government takes on a much more active meaning means more than

popular accountability; the state is actively responsible for ensuring individual liberty and progress.[135]

Similarly, Croly revises the meaning of individual responsibility, aimed at instilling a

"comprehensive and unmitigable(sic)" sense of responsibility that individuals owe each other and

the nation (285-286). He therefore rejects the binary between individualism and community as false.

Instead, "the nation gives individuality an increased scope and meaning by offering individuals a

chance for effective service, such as they could never attain under a system of collective

irresponsibility. Thus under a system of collective responsibility the process of social improvement is

absolutely identified with that of individual improvement" (408-409). Crucially, Croly reinterprets

traditional values of self-reliance and individualism as themselves requiring a more capacious sense

of social responsibility.[136]

For Croly, responsibility required rejecting "the economic individualism of our existing

national system," which "inflicts the most serious damage on American individuality."[137] This line of

argument continued in *The New Republic*, which he co-founded in 1914, until well after his death in

1930. Reflecting upon the necessity of American liberalism to take stock of changing economic and

social conditions, a 1935 editorial condemned free-market liberalism as the cause of massive

inequality: "at least one kind of liberty must be ended—that is, the liberty of a few to amass wealth

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[135] Indeed, Croly's wide-reaching proposals for economic and political centralization are defended throughout the book as necessary for ensuring responsible governance. *Ibid.*, 11-12. These include greater centralization and empowerment of the states' governors, to implement his other reforms as well as increase democratic accountability (339-340). Furthermore, Croly expands the notion of responsible power to include economic and industrial organizations rather than just political power (368).

[136] This interpretation is in stark contrast to readings of Croly as rejecting individualism whole cloth. For this reading, see: David K. Nichols, "The Promise of Progressivism: Herbert Croly and the Progressive Rejection of Individual Rights," *Publius* 17, no. 2 (1987).

[137] Croly, *Promise of American Life*, 409.

and power by ownership of the means of production. Their liberty to do this means intolerable restrictions on the welfare and freedom of others."[138] *The New Republic* also featured John Dewey's critiques of a myopic individualism and his defense of a liberalism defined by social responsibility

In one such series of essays, titled *Individualism, Old and New*, Dewey argues for an "organic" account of political incorporation, through which "law will be realized not as a rule arbitrarily imposed from without but as the relations which hold individuals together."[139] Dewey argues that it is necessary to overcome antiquated conceptions of individualism to achieve this harmonious relationship between individuals and society. The "old individualism," understood as static and universal, ignores links between individual desires, beliefs, and morals and changing social orders.[140] As Dewey concludes: "The chief obstacle to the creation of a type of individual whose pattern of thought and desire is enduringly marked by consensus with others, and in whom sociability is one with cooperation in all regular human associations, is the persistence of that feature of the earlier individualism which defines industry and commerce by ideas of private pecuniary profit" (84).[141] Overcoming the sovereignty of the economic individual is a prerequisite for this project.

Reinterpreting individualism as embedded within social, economic, and political structures entails a corresponding reinterpretation of responsibility. Like Croly, Dewey argues that "organized

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[138] "Liberalism Twenty Years After," *The New Republic*, January 23, 1935 1935, 290. The differences between the progressive era liberals such as Croly and the inter-war New Deal liberals should not be overstated. As Gary Gerstle notes, New Deal liberals focused much less on the idea of individual edification and virtue, and instead "reserved their moral passion for economic reform." Gary Gerstle, "The Protean Character of American Liberalism," *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 4 (1994): 1044.

[139] John Dewey, "Individualism, Old and New," in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, [1930] 1984), 65. Dewey's debt to T. H. Green's organicism is explicit and acknowledged: See: "Liberalism and Social Action," in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University PRess, [1935] 1987), 20.. See also: Freeden *Ideologies and Political Theory*, 255 and Ryan, *Making of Modern Liberalism*, 461.

[140] Dewey, *Individualism, Old and New*, 80.

[141] Dewey makes a similar argument 5 years later in *Liberalism and Social Action*: "The underlying philosophy and psychology of earlier liberalism led to a conception of individuality as something ready-made, already possessed, and needing only the removal of certain legal restrictions to come into full play. It was not conceived as a moving thing, something that is attained only by continuous growth. Because of this failure, the dependence in fact of individuals upon social conditions was made little of" (30).

society must use its powers to establish the conditions under which the mass of individuals can possess actual as distinct from merely legal liberty."[142] Instead of glorifying "the virtues of initiative, independence, choice, and responsibility, virtues that centre in and proceed from individuals as such," Dewey argues that individual liberty and progress require concerted and responsible social action (29). He critiques the moralization of personal responsibility, contending that calls on the poor to pull themselves out of poverty as "faith in moral magic." Instead, "recovery of individuals capable of stable and effective self-control can be had only as there is first a humbler exercise of will to observe existing social realities and to direct them according to their own potentialities."[143]

Rather than relying on the "moral magic" of personal responsibility, Dewey calls for "organized social planning" in which industrial and financial institutions "provide the material basis for the cultural liberation and growth of individuals."[144] By supplementing political and economic liberation with an account of the necessary cultural resources, Dewey's theorization of responsibility becomes even more nuanced. Like Croly, he chastises faith in the self-organizing powers of economic freedom as a "lazy abdication of responsibility." Instead, Dewey calls on liberalism to take "responsibility for undertaking the task of reconstruction and direction" of American culture.[145]

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[142] Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*, 21.

[143] Dewey, *Individualism, Old and New*, 74. Dewey makes a similar argument about criminal justice: "The possibility of effective treatment began when diseases were regarded as having an intrinsic origin in interactions of the organism and its natural environment. We are only just beginning to think of criminality as an equally intrinsic manifestation of interactions between an individual and the social environment. With respect to it, and with respect to so many other evils, we persist in thinking and acting in prescientific 'moral' terms" (119).

[144] Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*, 40. Dewey makes this point several times: "Liberty is that secure release and fulfillment of personal potentialities which takes place only in rich and manifold association with others." John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry* (Athens, OH: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, [1927] 1954), 150. "The question of the practical significance of liberty is much wider than that of the relation of government to the individual, to say nothing of the monstrosity of the doctrine that assumes that under all conditions governmental action and individual liberty are found in separate spheres. [...] full freedom of the human spirit and of individuality can be achieved only as there is effective opportunity to share in the cultural resources of civilization." "The Future of Liberalism," *The Journal of Philosophy* 32, no. 9 (1935): 230. Additionally, Dewey called for significant federal poverty relief, asserting that "the Federal Government has an obligation from the standpoint of national prosperity as well as human welfare". The New York Times, "Asks Federal Fund to Aid Unemployed," in *John Dewey: The Later Works: 1925-1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 435.

[145] Dewey, *Individualism, Old and New*, 110.

Responsibility is not a predicate of pre-existing individuals, but as a set of social, political, and cultural practices aimed at ensuring individual liberty and development.[146]

These discourses were taken up to some extent in the political programs of the New Deal and Great Society.[147] While ultimately displaced, they suggest the possibilities of a contending interpretation of responsibility within American political culture and discourse. In these discourses, governments had an expansive responsibility to ensure a well-ordered and equal society. Individuals were not solely responsible for their social and economic status, as states had an obligation to manage financial and industrial growth to ensure just outcomes. Personal responsibility existed, but was mediated by a recognition of the essential social nature of individuals.

This is not to suggest that this interpretation was without its flaws. While moralistic discourses of personal responsibility risk depoliticizing political questions by framing them in moral terms, the image of responsibility presented here risks substituting technocratic expertise and state management for political judgment and collective power.[148] Similarly, it invokes a conception of the national interest as necessarily unified and settled and calls upon a "spirit of broad and far-reaching nationalism for what concerns our people as a whole."[149] Most troublingly, this progressive spirit

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[146] Hence, Dewey's focus on education, art, and culture. For an overview see: Ryan, *Making of Modern Liberalism*, 489-504.

[147] For example, President Roosevelt's first "cardinal principle" of welfare locates primary responsibility for poverty relief in community organizations and governments. However, in crises such bodies can become overrun, requiring the Federal government to take on "responsibility for human welfare," a "duty and responsibility the Federal Government should carry out promptly, fearlessly, and generously." Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Radio Address on Unemployment and Social Welfare from Albany, New York," in *Franklin D. Roosevelt, Master Speech File, 1891-1945* (Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, 1932). President Johnson similarly described the Great Society in terms of a liberalism which "demands an end to poverty and racial injustice." Lyndon B. Johnson, "Remarks at the University of Michigan," in *Lyndon B. Johnson: 1963-64 (in two books): containing the public messages, speeches, and statements of the president* (Washington, DC: Public Papers of the Presidents, 1964), 704. Joseph A. Califano, Jr. makes this implicit conception of responsibility explicit: "Johnson converted the federal government into a far more energetic, proactive force for social justice[…] He vested the federal government with the responsibility to soften the sharp elbows of capitalism and give it a beating, human heart; to redistribute opportunity as well as wealth" Joseph A. Califano Jr., "What Was Really Great About the Great Society," *The Washington Monthly*, October, 1999, 17.

[148] Theodore Roosevelt's articulation of "New Nationalism" put great faith in the power of expert administration "wholly removed from the possibility of political pressure" to ensure financial, trade, and conservation policy promoted the general welfare. Theodore Roosevelt, "The New Nationalism: Speech at Osawatomie," in *The New Nationalism*, ed. Ernest Hamlin Abott (New York: The Outlook Company, 1910), 16-17.

[149] Roosevelt, "New Nationalism," 27.

treated human beings like other resources to be managed through expert administration, often

endorsing eugenics.[150]

Therefore, this section's purpose is not to unequivocally endorse the progressive

interpretation of responsibility. It does, however, demonstrate the presence of alternative

conceptions of responsibility present in American thought and discourse and suggest the conditions

of possibility for an interpretation of responsibility within American culture that departs from

individualistic assumptions. In many ways, the politics of anticipatory responsibility, discussed in

Chapter 4, resembles the arguments of Croly and Dewey. Both positions prioritize structural reform

and political action over moralistic discourses of guilt and blame. Both also emphasize human beings

as necessarily relational beings, bound up in social connections, rather than atomistic individuals.

The presence of these discourses within the American political tradition offers a reminder of both

the contingency of contemporary decontestations of responsibility and the possibility of

contestation over its meaning.

VII- Pathologies of Personal Responsibility and the Threat of Depoliticization.

In addition to showing how pervasive narratives of personal responsibility have become, this

survey also demonstrates how these narratives generate two political pathologies. First, ascriptions

of personal responsibility, in identifying an individual as solely responsible for some negative

outcome, obscure the structural production of suffering and injustice. The political imaginary

presupposed by dominant narratives of responsibility leaves little room for socio-economic

structures, political institutions, and productive power. Instead, the only entities envisioned are

discrete individuals making voluntary decisions with clearly discernable consequences.

Considerations of historical and social context, power, and institutional position are relegated to

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[150] See: Thomas C. Leonard, "Eugenics and Economics in the Progressive Era," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 4 (2005).

background conditions if not reduced to ephemera. Second, precisely because these discourses obscure the social and institutional generation of injustice, ascriptions of personal responsibility quickly transform into discourses of victim blaming and scape-goating. When structural forces produce unequal and adverse outcomes, the desire to hold someone responsible for human suffering creates perverse incentives to castigate suffering individuals and groups as themselves responsible for their injustice. Instead of ensuring accountability for injustice, narratives of personal responsibility become pathological by reproducing rather than alleviating suffering and injustice.

Together these pathologies produce a tendency to depoliticization. As seen in my readings of both political and philosophical liberalism, social structures, and their effects on individual behavior, are treated as neutral background conditions beyond the scope of political analysis. When individuals are treated as solely responsible for their life outcomes, there is no need to engage in political reforms to socio-economic structures and political institutions. Reforming individual behavior, discouraging irresponsible behavior is the only acceptable response to suffering within this discursive environment. This both insulates the status quo from criticism, but also discourages building concerted political power. These narratives discourage building political coalitions to address injustices in two ways. First, it frames injustices as deserved suffering; there is no reason to mobilize political power if people are suffering because of their own deliberate actions. Second, by directing resentment towards the suffering themselves, mobilizing around their suffering is actively discouraged. Those in poverty, for example, become objects of pity or scorn rather than as evidence of the injustice of the current economic system.

The ubiquity of this decontestation of responsibility testifies to the powerful hold that narratives of personal responsibility have on political thinking. The inability of even staunch critics of these discourses to extricate themselves from personal and moral framings of responsibility suggests a powerful psychic and political attachment to personal responsibility. Challenging the

moralism of this mode of thinking, and introducing a contending interpretation of responsibility requires both probing and reorienting these affective attachments. Reviving contestation over the meaning of responsibility requires understanding the deep desire to hold individuals responsible and find ways to channel these desires in politically productive ways.

To this end, the next chapter turns explicitly to Nietzsche's thought, and his psychological and political diagnosis of the attachment to moral responsibility and the broader "moral world order" it supports. Nietzsche's thought provides valuable resources both for uncovering the disavowed psychic drives underpinning narratives of personal responsibility and for reviving a sense of responsibility for the world itself. Recognizing the enormous power that narratives of responsibility hold on modern moral and political imagination, Nietzsche does not reject the idea of responsibility, but unsettles its dominant moralistic interpretations and opens up possibilities for new forms of political thinking.

I-The "Revaluation of All Values:" Nietzsche's Critical Practice

If the ubiquity of moralistic narratives of personal responsibility requires both a radical shift

in perspective and a diagnosis of the affective attachment to personal responsibility, turning to

Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of personal responsibility seems natural. "We no longer have any

sympathy today with the concept of 'free will:' we know only too well what it is," he writes in

Twilight of the Idols. "Everywhere responsibilities are sought […] it is usually the instinct of *desiring to*

punish and judge which seeks it […] the doctrine of the will has been invented for the purpose of

punishment, that is of *wanting to find guilty* (*TI*: "Errors," 7).[1] While similarly bombastic passages are

legion,[2] dwelling on these alone is bound to be unsuccessful. Similar arguments against moral

responsibility have proliferated but have done little to dislodge the popular narrative of the

responsible individual. Though Nietzsche's rejection of responsibility has received significant

scholarly attention,[3] a myopic focus obscures Nietzsche's more nuanced and sophisticated treatment

of responsibility.

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[1] I have modified the translation to better reflect Nietzsche's emphasis on the desire [*Wollen*] to punish and judge. In evaluating translations, I make frequent use of Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Studien Ausgabe Im 15 Banden* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999). Citations to these volumes are noted as *KSA* in the text and refer to volume and section, and represent my own translations.

[2] This critique is a constant theme in his writings, from *Human all too Human* to *Twilight of the Idols*. For examples see: *HH*: 106-107; *AOM*: 33; *D*: 116; *BGE*: 21; *TI*: "Errors," 8; and *WP*: 551,765. "Human, All Too Human," in *Human, All Too Human* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1879] 1990). Citations to Volume I are noted as *HH* in the text and refer to aphorism number. Volume 2 consists of the following two works: "Assorted Opinions and Maxims," in *Human, All Too Human* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1879] 1990); "The Wanderer and His Shadow," in *Human, All Too Human* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1880] 1990). Citations will be noted as either *AOM* (*Assorted Opinions and Maxims* or *WS* (*The Wanderer and his Shadow*) and refer to aphorism number. *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1881] 1997). Citations are noted as *D* in the text and refer to aphorism number. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Judith Norma (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1886] 2002). Citations are noted as *BGE* in the text and refer to aphorism number.

[3] Such passages are often pointed to in "naturalistic" readings of Nietzsche. Such readings contend that Nietzsche rejects concepts such as a "free will" and "moral responsibility" for being inconsistent with a naturalistic worldview and the findings of modern science. Emblematic interpretations are: Brian Leiter, "The Paradox of Fatalism and Self-Creation in Nietzsche," in *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator*, ed. Christopher Janaway (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Mathias Risse, "Nietzschean 'Animal Psychology' Versus Kantian Ethics," in *Nietzsche and Morality*, ed.

A close reading of Nietzsche reveals a project of reinterpretation rather than one of outright rejection. Nietzsche describes his project as one of "revaluation," and spent the last years of his productive life beginning an ambitious project titled, *The Revaluation of All Values*.[4] Though this work is left incomplete, aspects of this project can be found throughout his work. It is present in his call in the "Preface" of *On the Genealogy of Morality* that "we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values should itself, for once, be examined*." Such a critique, he continues, requires studying "the conditions and circumstances under which the values grew up, developed and changed (morality as result, as symptom as mask, as tartuffery, as sickness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause, remedy, simulant, inhibition, poison)" (*GM*: P.6).[5] The project of revaluation requires a critical interrogation of dominant moral values to understand how they came to be dominant and what psychological and political factors contribute to their dominance. However, as he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, such investigation, "are only preconditions for his [the philosopher's] task: the task itself has another will, — it calls for him to *create values*" (*BGE*: 211). Nietzsche's goal is neither disinterested historical inquiry or an attempt to recover an edenic pre-moral past, but to challenge the assumed naturalness and universality of moral values in order to encourage their reinterpretation.

Brian Leiter and Neil Sinhababu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Joshua Knobe and Brian Leiter, "The Case for Nietzschean Moral Psychology," ibid.; Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche's Theory of the Will," in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, ed. Ken Gemes and Simon May (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Similarly, Galen Strawson treats Nietzsche as anticipating hard determinist positions that leave little room for "folk" conceptions such as moral responsibility. Strawson, "Impossibility of Responsibility," 15

[4] This left only the first volume – *The Antichrist* – completed. In his preface to *Twilight*, Nietzsche, he closes: "Turin, on 30 September 1888, the day that the first book of the *Revaluation of All Values* was finished" (*TI*: "Preface"). In a note from that same fall, only months before his collapse, Nietzsche gives the following outline for the project: "**Revaluation of all Values**. *The Antichrist*. An attempt at a critique of Christianity. *The Free Spirit*. Critique of the most fateful form of ignorance, morality. *The Immoralist*. Critique of philosophy as a nihilistic movement. *Dionysus*. Philosophy of Eternal Recurrence" (*KSA*: 13:19[8]). Another outline from the Fall of 1888 has modifications to the titles of the four books – The Antichrist, The Immoralist, We Yes-Sayers, Dionysus – while retaining the order and content of the subtitles (*KSA*: 13:22[14]).

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1887] 1997). Citations are noted in the text as *GM* and refer to essay and section number.

Nietzsche accomplishes this through what Christa Davis Acampora has called an "agonistic" approach, which understands value evolution and transformation as occurring through contestation with other values.[6] "Historical study and presentation not only discovers values of the past and disclose something of their transmission but also constitute acts of valuation themselves. That is to say, when we engage in historical inquiry, we remake values, form new ones, at the same time as we learn about those held by others."[7] Hence Nietzsche reminds his readers, "let us not be ungrateful towards such resolute reversals of familiar perspectives and valuations" as his genealogies aim to help us both "to see differently and to *want* to see differently" (*GM*: III.12). Such reversals create tension in our own self-understanding, which can inspire us to reinterpret the world and create new forms of understanding.[8] Similarly, Nietzsche's aphoristic style allows him to indulge in "brief habits," to "know *many* things and states down to their sweetnesses and bitternesses," and constantly shift perspectives, experimenting with different interpretations of the world (*GS*: 295).[9] By

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[6] See: Christa Davis Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche* (University of Chicago Press, 2013). Acampora draws on the conceptual framework established in Nietzsche's 1872 study, "Homer's Contest," in which Nietzsche argues that competition, contestation, and conflict are necessary to spur human creativity through which existence can be made bearable (*HC*: 175). Friedrich Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest," in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Citations are noted as *HC* and refer to the page number in Diethe's translation. While "Homer's Contest" was not formally published, it constitutes a finished work as Nietzsche presented it to Cosima Wagner as a Christmas present and intended it to be viewed and read. Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 5. Through this framework, Acampora treats Nietzsche's work as both uncovering the historical contest between different value systems — for example: "Thucydides and Plato" (*TI*: "Ancients," 2), "Judea against Rome" (*GM*: I.16), and "*Dionysus versus the Crucified*" (*EH*: "Destiny," 9) [6] — but also as a means to reinvigorate agonistic contest over values that have become ossified. It is important to distinguish this position from democratic agonism. I am not claiming that Nietzsche's account of agonism either provides a democratic theory or makes Nietzsche a democratic theorist. For such readings see: Connolly, *Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, especially Chapter 6; Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, especially Chapter 2; Stephen K White, *The Ethos of a Late-Modern Citizen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 40-41; Lawrence J Hatab, *A Nietzschean Defense of Democracy: An Experiment in Postmodern Politics* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999). As Acampora notes, Nietzsche's agonistic approach cannot exclude democratic commitments to equality and freedom from contestation. See: *Contesting Nietzsche*, 26 and Christa Davis Acampora, "Demos Agonistes Redux: Reflections on the *Streit* of Political Agonism," *Nietzsche-Studien* 32 (2003).

[7] Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 39. Compare this account of inquiry to the discussion of political concepts in Chapter 1.

[8] Therefore, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes the *Genealogy* as "uncannier than anything else written so far;" it is "calculated to mislead" and slowly creates friction "until eventually a *tempo feroce* is attained in which everything rushes ahead in tremendous tension" (*EH*: "Genealogy").

[9] Jill Marsden contends that Nietzsche views each aphorism as a self-contained perspective, or "a novel experiment in the provocation to think." Jill Marsden, "Nietzsche and the Art of the Aphorism," in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 25. See also: Tracy B. Strong, "In Defense of Rhetoric: Or How Hard It Is to Take a Writer Seriously: The Case of Nietzsche," *Political Theory* 41, no. 4 (2013). This is seen clearly in

dislocating the reader with novel historical revelations or a constant barrage of multiple perspectives, Nietzsche seeks to encourage his readers to critically reflect on their own internalized values and create new ways of thinking. Thus, in terms of the mode of inquiry defended in Chapter 1, Nietzsche's writings expose the contingency of previously decontested political concepts through genealogical critique, while opening up new imaginative vistas by experimenting with different ways of seeing the political world.

With this understanding foregrounded, Nietzsche's interrogation of responsibility takes on a new political salience. Rather than attempting to settle a debate for or against moral responsibility, he is interested in the psychological and political forces that underpin both invocations and critiques of responsibility. Writing in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche states: "in general, if I have observed correctly, "un-freedom of the will" is regarded as a problem by two completely opposed parties, but always in a profoundly *personal* manner. The one party [those who believe in free will and moral responsibility] would never dream of relinquishing their 'responsibility,' a belief in *themselves*, a personal right to *their own* merit […] Those in the other party, [those who reject free will] on the contrary, do not want to be responsible for anything or to be guilty of anything; driven by an inner self-contempt, they long to be able to *shift* the blame for themselves to something else" (*BGE*: 21). Both ascriptions and rejections of responsibility are less about philosophical argument than psychological convictions and political imaginations. Ascriptions of responsibility stem from the need to believe in desert and merit, structuring a world of individuals solely in control of their own destinies. Those who reject responsibility as relying false metaphysical premises are driven, according to Nietzsche, by a fear of responsibility and a desire to constantly pass blame. These circuits of

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the first section of *Twilight*, titled "Maxims and Arrows [*Sprüche und Pfeile*]." After making "a *grand declaration of war*" (*TI*: P), Nietzsche launches a barrage of aphorisms, constantly forcing the reader into new perspectives without warning or priming.

desire can be seen in the American obsession with personal responsibility: the desire to see oneself

as self-made and independent, as solely responsible for success, becomes a pathological politics of

resentment directed towards the vulnerable. As painful reminders of the forces beyond one's control

as well as unequal and unjust socio-economic systems, they are treated as irresponsible individuals to

be blamed for their own suffering.

Similarly, he describes a decline in responsibility as characteristic of modernity.[10] "The West

in its entirety has lost the sort of instincts that give rise to institutions, that give rise to a *future*: it

might well be that nothing rubs its 'modern spirit' the wrong way more than this. People live for

today, people live very fast, – people live very irresponsibly: and this is precisely what people call

'freedom'" (*TI*: "Expeditions," 39). Modern doctrines of freedom and autonomy, while generating a

particularly personalized conception of responsibility, displace what Nietzsche sees as a more

fundamental and capacious sense of responsibility: one premised not on individual freedom but on

authority, institutional permanence, and obligation. Therefore, Nietzsche frequently praises "the

most comprehensive responsibility" of the philosopher (*BGE*: 61), who can "bear the *greatest*

responsibility and *not* collapse under it" (*WP*: 975), and defines his own "conception of freedom" as

"that one has the will to self-responsibility" (*TI*: "Expeditions," 38).

In these passages, Nietzsche engages the same problematic of responsibility that opened the

study and, as I argue, aims to recover a more capacious and constitutive sense of responsibility.[11]

Nietzsche's own analysis recalls Chapter 1's conceptual analysis of responsibility; responsibility in its

most general form is an ability to answer for something: a debt, a position of authority, an object of

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[10] While this term itself is contested, debates over the precise meaning of modernity are beyond the scope of this study. I invoke this term to recall the general parameters of the political condition that was emerging during Nietzsche's life, which we still share: the rise of the democratic and bureaucratic state, increasingly globalized chains of production and consumption, an ideological prioritization of the individual, and the general acceptance of market economies. These general contours are those that generate the predicament of responsibility with which I opened Chapter 1.

[11] I am indebted to Bonnie Honig's reading of Nietzsche for the language of "recovery" with respect to responsibility. See Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 42-46.

concern, or a moral obligation. Additionally, I take inspiration from Donna J. Haraway's provocative

yet underdetermined figuring of responsibility as "the capacity to respond" to develop my reading of

Nietzsche.[12] Responsibility, for Nietzsche, is not an inherent human faculty but a power to be

cultivated and enhanced; rather than answering for a specific moral claim, financial debt, or legal

liability, he envisions a more protean response to the world itself. This response takes specific shape

by inhabiting particular moral and political discourses at specific historical time periods, but should

always be understood as a contingent and contestable value system. While moralistic forms of

personal responsibility currently dominate our political and ethical imaginations, Nietzsche's insight

is that understanding the psychic and political sources of these attachments is required if they are to

be redirected towards alternative, life-affirming ends. Thus, Nietzsche's thought offers an invitation:

his own attempt to interrogate and reinterpret moral responsibility can animate a contemporary

project of interpreting responsibility politically.[13]

In what follows, I reconstruct Nietzsche's critique and revaluation of moral responsibility. In

contrast to the image of responsibility as a moral debt, both ubiquitous in American political

discourse and deleterious to political action, Nietzsche depicts a life-affirming image of taking

responsibility both for one's values and the future of human flourishing. This revaluation is

accomplished by reinterpreting both the temporality and object of responsibility. Temporally,

Nietzsche moves the question of responsibility from settling a past debt towards future creativity in

three aspects of his thought: his genealogical method, which replaces a linear conception of causality

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[12] Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 71. Haraway's goal in this figuration is to think of this capacity as shaped "only in and for multidirectional relationships, in which always more than one responsive entity is in the process of becoming" (71). The ultimate goal is developing a multi-species responsibility (81) that both challenges risk-benefit calculations (71) and can motivate more ethical relationships between species (88).
[13] Though Wolin is highly critical of Nietzsche's thought, this account of Nietzsche's method, if not the particular answers he gives, dovetails with Wolin's own account of political theory's potential to generate new ways of seeing and engaging the world. See the discussion in Chapter 1, section II. Wolin's criticism of Nietzsche will be explicitly engaged in Chapter 4.

with one that is emergent and diffused; his account of the philosopher's responsibility for creating new values, which orients responsibility firmly towards the future; and his doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same (ERS), which denies any final resolution or settlement of responsibility. This temporal reorientation entails a parallel shift in the object of responsibility from the individual's deeds to the world itself. These threads form the core of what I call anticipatory responsibility: anticipating a future of human flourishing, one takes responsibility for the world – the totality of material, social, and political conditions of human life – as that which eternally recurs into the future.

This argument unfolds as follows. First, in Section II, I turn to Nietzsche's critique of moral responsibility as originating in resentment and culminating in the subjection of life to the moral world-order. In addition to diagnosing the political and psychological appeal to moralistic narratives, Nietzsche's critique demonstrates how moralistic thinking precludes the space of political action by subjecting life to a transcendent moral law. Existing norms of moral and responsible behavior are abstracted into universal norms, leaving no room for critique or refashioning; this same logic underpins the argument of Chapter 2, as moral deviancy is invoked to insulate existing structures from critique and reform. In Section III, I deepen the argument, showing how Nietzsche's critique reveals potentials within this moralistic framework for reinterpreting responsibility and itself performs a revisionary mode of account-giving. In Sections IV and V with particular attention paid to *Thus Spoke* Zarathustra, I reconstruct Nietzsche's temporal reorientation of responsibility. Section IV focuses on the language of children and pregnancy, which shift responsibility from adjudicating past debts towards taking responsibility for future values. In Section V, I turn to the eternal recurrence of the same to complicate the responsibility's temporality, as something that can only be taken amidst ongoing historical processes. In Section VI, in response to the individualistic overtones of *Zarathustra*, I recover underappreciated resources within *Zarathustra* and other writings that foreground the world itself, rather than individual deeds, as the proper object of responsibility.

Finally, I conclude by outlining the possibilities of this more capacious sense of responsibility for theorizing political responsibility.

II-The "Moral World-Order:" Nietzsche's Critique of Personal Responsibility

Nietzsche's critique of personal moral responsibility cannot be separated from his investigations into the social, political, and psychological functions it performs in modernity. This is because he does not approach responsibility as a decontextualized abstract concept, but as a political value that both reflects and animates particular social practices and psychological desires. As he makes clear in the beginning of the "Second Essay" of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, "the long history of the origins of *responsibility* [*Verantwortlichkeit*]" is constituted by the "task of breeding an animal with the prerogative to promise" *(GM*: II.2). Nietzsche does not view responsibility as an inherent human faculty, but as a social achievement: a series of political and psychological developments were necessary for humans to become the type of beings that could be held responsible. Nietzsche's critical project aims to uncover how and why this interpretation of human life came to dominate our moral and political imagination to call into question the universality of personal responsibility and make possible its reinterpretation. Nietzsche's critique further strengthens and deepens the preceding chapter's critique of personal responsibility by exploring the affective and political means by which this interpretation was decontested. Nietzsche's critique reveals how these narratives both appeal to psychological drives to become settled, and reorganize individual's and society's affective economy once internalized.

Nietzsche's critique begins with psychological diagnoses. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he describes psychology as the "queen of the sciences" and "the path to the fundamental problems" (*BGE*: 23). Rather than studying the logical conditions under which someone is or is not responsible, Nietzsche reverses the question and asks why it is that individuals and societies desire a responsible agent. This shifts the questions from one of the conditions of possibility to: "'Why is the

belief in such judgments necessary?' — and to comprehend that such judgements must be *believed* to

be true, for the sake of the preservations of creatures like ourselves" (*BGE*: 11).[14] Nietzsche's

question is therefore: Why are ascriptions of responsibility necessary and how does the belief in their

necessity make possible particular forms of life?

Following this line of inquiry, Nietzsche conceives of human beings as creative animals that

imbue the world with value by imagining value systems that render it meaningful. As early as *The*

Birth of Tragedy (1872), he describes the "drive which calls art into being to complete and perfect

existence and thus to seduce us into continuing to live" (*BT*: 3).[15] In an unpublished 1873 essay, "On

Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," Nietzsche continues this argument by describing "the

fundamental human drive" to metaphorically and artistically represent the world meaningfully, as

what distinguishes humanity from the rest of nature (*TL*: 150-151).[16] This theme of human beings as

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[14] Robert B. Pippin's reading of Nietzsche is particularly valuable on this point, reading Nietzsche's work as a series of investigations into the values and ideals to which humans become affectively attached and around which they motivate their life projects. Robert B. Pippin, *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 15-17. In this view, nihilism "does not consist in a failure of knowledge or a failure of strength or courage or will but a *failure of desire*" (54).

[15] Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1872] 1999). Citations are noted as *BT* in the text and refer to section number. In a later passage, Nietzsche describes "all-powerful artistic drives in nature," by which humans naturally take pleasure in semblances as rooted in this same drive to make existence bearable (*BT*: 4). While Nietzsche later distances himself from much of *Birth* as too dependent on Wagner and Schopenhauer, in his 1886 preface to its republication, he maintains that "the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon" and finds in his discussion of semblance and art the beginnings of a "pessimism 'beyond good and evil'" that already points beyond Schopenhauer. He continues: "all life rests on semblance, art, deception, prismatic effects, the necessity of perspectivism and error" (*BT*: P.5). In *The Gay Science*, he repeats this refrain: "As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* to us, and art furnishes us with the eye and hand and above all the good conscience to make such a phenomenon of ourselves (*GS*: 107). *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1882] 2001). Citations are noted as *GS* in the text and refer to aphorism number

[16] "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Citations are noted in the text as *TL* and refer to the page number of Spiers' translation. Maudemarie Clark views this essay as an early flirtation with a general falsification thesis that Nietzsche ultimately rejects in favor of a scientific account of truth and Michael S. Green views this essay as the first instantiation of a lifelong espousal of an epistemological error theory. See: Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Chapter 3; Michael Steven Green, *Nietzsche and the Transcendental Tradition* (Campaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 28-35. In contrast, I follow Joshua Andresen's interpretation of this essay as a critique of correspondence theories of truth. Joshua Andresen, "Truth and Illusion Beyond Falsification: Re-Reading on Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense," *Nietzsche-Studien* 39 (2010). Andresen stresses that Nietzsche focuses on how artistically created concepts come to be taken in a moral-scientific worldview as

evaluative animals is found throughout the breadth of his writings (See: *HH*: 29; *WS*: 32; *D*: 117,

119; *GS*: 11; *BGE*: 291; *TI*: "Expeditions," 19; *WP*: 505, 507), and receives its most succinct

formulation in *Zarathustra.* "Humans first placed values into things, in order to preserve themselves

— they first created meaning for things, a human meaning! That is why they call themselves

'human,' that is: the esteemer" (*TSZ*: "Thousand and one Goals").[17] Nietzsche takes seriously the

imaginative element of political values as artful depictions of the world, necessary for survival.

Nietzsche's thought aligns with Chapter 1's argument that as a political concept,

responsibility should be understood ordering the world in a particular way. According to Nietzsche,

ascriptions of responsibility order the world by both distinguishing human beings from nature and

by accounting for the seemingly unaccountable suffering of existence. Confronted by a world of

constant movement, where everything in nature appears to follow pre-ordained laws, human beings

needed a way to distinguish themselves from other animals. Though "*always* living in manifold

dependence" humans created feelings of power through assertion of the uniqueness of their actions

(*WS*: 10). Humans desired to be

> […] the free being in a world of unfreedom, the eternal *miracle worker* whether he
> does good or ill, the astonishing exception, the superbeast and almost-god, the
> meaning of creation which cannot be thought away, the solution of the cosmic
> riddle, the mighty ruler over nature and the despiser of it, the creature which calls *its*
> history *world-history*! — *Vanitas vanitatum homo* (*WS*: 12).

Unlike natural occurrences, the human actions constituted genuine events as their causes could be

located in an accountable agent. Humans, desiring to free themselves from the constant becoming

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the essences of things (267) and attempts to "get us to think about truth in new ways that will invite future attempts to metaphorically interpret the world" (281).

[17] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, [1883, 1884, 1885] 1995). Citations are noted as *TSZ* in the text and refer to chapter and section number (where appropriate). Martin Heidegger helpfully unpacks Nietzsche's conception of value as "a condition of life, a condition of life's being 'alive'". See Martin Heidegger, "The Will to Power as Knowledge," in *Nietzsche Volume Iii: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, [1961] 1987), 15. This theme is extensively studied throughout Heidegger's Summer 1939 lecture course published as "The Will to Power as Knowledge."

of nature, thought of themselves as unique authors of actions, as responsible agents who could direct history independently of natural forces.[18]

By demarcating a set of events as deeds authored by a freely willing subject, doctrines of personal responsibility distinguish human beings from non-human nature. However, they do so at the cost of instilling a set of pathological drives. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he describes the psychological underpinnings as "the longing to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for your actions and to relieve God, world, ancestors, chance, and society of the burden" as well as to pull "yourself by the hair from the swamp of nothingness up into existence" (*BGE*: 21). In language anticipatory of the "bootstraps" discourse that accompanies contemporary invocations of personal responsibility discussed in Chapter 2, Nietzsche describes these discourses as an obsession with treating individuals as entirely autonomous from outside influence.

Nietzsche also anticipates how this desire for autonomy can become weaponized in ascriptions of blame and guilt. He locates the impetus behind outward ascriptions of responsibility in the problem of unaccounted suffering. Beset by pain and suffering beyond their control, humans need to make sense of and provide meaning for suffering. Meaningless suffering becomes a greater source of pain than the original suffering itself, becoming "the curse that has so far blanketed mankind" (*GM*: III.28). To pinpoint a responsible agent serves as a salve to this psychic wound, allowing individuals to reassert cognitive order over the world. As he writes in *Twilight*, "to trace something unknown back to something known is alleviating, soothing, gratifying, and gives moreover a feeling of power. Danger disquiet, anxiety attend the unknown — the first instinct is to

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[18] On the distinction between events and deeds in Nietzsche's thought see: Pippin, *Nietzsche, Psychology, & First Philosophy*, 72.

eliminate these distressing states" (*TI*: "Errors," 5). This causal identification renders the world

meaningful.[19]

For these discourses to become internalized, however, requires an intense political project.[20]

As Nietzsche insists in the *Genealogy*, the "inescapable thought" that "'the criminal deserves to be

punished *because* he could have acted otherwise,' is actually an extremely late and refined form of

human judgment and inference" (*GM*: II.4). Instead, and in contrast to his contemporaries and the

"idiocy of their moral genealogy" (*GM*: I.2), Nietzsche inverts the conceptual relationship between

punishment and responsibility. Responsibility does not justify punishment; rather, centuries of

punishment were required to inculcate a particular form of consciousness necessary to think of

oneself and others as self-responsible.

Nietzsche develops this argument in the "Second Essay" of the *Genealogy*, beginning with the

etymological links between guilt [*Schuld*] and debt [*Schulden*].[21] Prior to the conception of a

responsible individual lies "the contractual relationship between *creditor* and *debtor*" (*GM*: II.4). The

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[19] For more on the moral psychology underpinning Nietzsche's account of blame see: Bernard Williams, "Nietzsche's Minimalist Moral Psychology," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's on the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Raffoul, 102-04.

[20] Nietzsche strongly asserts that values are always reflective and generative of political conditions. In *The Gay Science*, for example, he writes: "Since the conditions for preserving one community have been very different from those of another community, there have been very different moralities; and in view of essential changes in herds and communities, states and societies that are yet to come, one can prophesy that there will yet be very divergent moralities" (*GS*: 116). Similarly, in 1884 he notes: "All evaluation is made from a definite perspective: that of the preservation of the individual, a community, a race, a state, a church, a faith, a culture" (*WP*: 259). Christopher Janaway stresses Rée's disregard of political and material relations as a key point of disagreement. Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness: Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 80-81. See also: Tracy B. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 91-93.

[21] It should be noted that this account departs from his depiction of morality in "middle" works such as *Human, All too Human* and *Daybreak*. In these texts, morality serves the "preservation of the community" (*HH*: 96) and functioned by inculcating a particular uniformity to custom through the threat of community exile (See *D*: 9). Nietzsche maintains the importance of this "morality of custom" in the *Genealogy*, but constitutes the "prehistoric labor" of fist "*making* man to a certain degree necessary, uniform, a peer amongst peers, orderly and consequently predictable" (*GM*: II.2). This preliminary step was necessary for the development of conscience, which Nietzsche views as crucial to responsibility. Even in these earlier works, however, Nietzsche insists that "to establish in each case whether an ill-doer is at all accountable for his deed" requires a "very peculiar conceptual mythology" that isolates individuals entirely from their social circumstance (*WS*: 23; see also *WS*: 28; *D*: 19). For more on the relationship between the "morality of custom" and responsibility, see: Peter R. Sedgwick, *Nietzsche's Justice: Naturalism in Search of an Ethics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), 80-86.

desire to punish was originally purely reactive, aiming to re-establish equivalence (*GM*: II.4-6). Over time, an entire system of thought developed, premised on "fixing prices, setting values, working out equivalents, exchanging" (*GM*: II.8). Retribution was not punishment's purpose (*GM*: II.12); instead, "punishment can clearly be seen to be richly laden with benefits of all kinds" (*GM*: II.14). One benefit was the development of "inwardness" as humans attempted to avoid the pain of punishment by turning against their own instincts and passions to tame their behavior (*GM*: II.16). While this originally lacked any sense of guilt, this "desire to give form to oneself as a piece of difficult, resisting, suffering matter, to brand it with a will" forms the origin of the development of a conscience (*GM*: II.18). Thus, through centuries of torture and punishment, human beings emerged with an interior psychic life, and thereby capable of being answerable to themselves and held responsible (*GM*: II.2).

Responsibility, therefore, serves as an almost liminal concept for Nietzsche: the idea of self-responsibility is only possible because punishment's creation of psychic life, yet it becomes a retroactive justification for punishment. Such thinking, while historically contingent, comes to dominate other ways of thinking.[22] As he writes in *Twilight*, "a particular kind of cause-ascription comes to preponderate more and more, becoming concentrated into a system and finally comes to *dominate* over the rest, that is to say simply to exclude *other* causes and explanations" (*TI*: "Errors," 5). Narratives of moral responsibility come to coalesce into what Nietzsche calls the "moral world-order" [*Sittlichen Weltordnung*] (*TI*: "Errors," 7). This manner of interpreting the world occupied Nietzsche's thought throughout his writings and receives a detailed treatment as early as *Daybreak*:

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[22] For example, Nietzsche frequently contrasts this particular "Christian" form of moral thinking with his own interpretation of the Greeks. He praises their "paganism" that allowed for the free expression of drives in ritual (*AOM*: 220), their celebration of innocence in tragedy (*D*: 78), their embrace of fate as a realm of incalculable (*D*: 130), and their conception of active intervening gods that brought about folly and misfortune all as palliatives for the Christian conception of guilt and sin.

> *The delusion of a moral world-order. – There is absolutely no eternal necessity* which decrees that every guilt [*Schuld*] will be atoned and paid for – that such a thing exists has been a dreadful and to only a miniscule extent useful delusion –: just as it is a delusion that everything is guilt which is *felt as such*. It is not *things*, but opinions *about things that have absolutely no existence*, which have so deranged mankind (*D*: 563)!

For Nietzsche, ascriptions of moral responsibility order the world in particular ways. First, every wrong-doing can be traced to a single agent that can be held responsible and guilty. Chance, circumstance, history, and social structures take no part in this social ontology. Second, this guilt can be quantified and tabulated such that an individual can take responsibility, atone, and repay his or her wrong-doing. Third, the world is structured such that every moral debt can and must be repaid in the last instance.[23] Thus, ascriptions of personal responsibility order the world in terms of a transcendental accounting practice in which moral debts must be reckoned, assigned, and balanced.[24]

In this worldview, ascriptions of responsibility do not simply resolve epistemic uncertainty, but become means by which vengeful desires for compensation are realized. "Moral judgment and condemnation is the favorite revenge," Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "a type of compensation for having been slighted by nature, and an opportunity to finally acquire spirit and *become* refined" (*BGE*: 219). To ascribe responsibility to another is a source of empowerment, as one gains "a *right* to ordain punishments" (*TI*: "Errors," 7) and "the elevated feeling of being in a position to despise and maltreat someone as an 'inferior'" (*GM*: II.5).[25] Thus the belief in moral responsibility is strengthened by the desire for revenge:

> no wonder then, if the entrenched, secretly smoldering emotions of revenge and hatred put this belief to their own use and, in fact, do not defend any belief more

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[23] This can take the form of the Christian "Last Judgment" (*GM*: I.14-15) or in secularized forms of justice. "What is common to both is that someone has to be to *blame* [*Schuld*] for the fact that one suffers — in short, that the suffer prescribes for himself the honey of revenge as a medicine for his suffering" (*TI*: "Expeditions," 34; see also: *BGE*: 202).
[24] Satkunanandan describes this as the "aspiration and expectation that all debts *should* be *calculable*; that is, all debts should be capable of being identified in advance, reckoned-up, negotiated, and discharged." *Extraordinary Responsibility*, 28.
[25] He continues in the next passage: "*to make* someone suffer is pleasure in its highest form […] the injured party received an extraordinary counter-pleasure in exchange for the injury and distress caused by the injury: to *make* someone suffer" (*GM*: II.6). Nietzsche diagnoses this as the psychological root of Christian interpretations of Hell (*GM*: I.15).

passionately than that *the strong are free* to be weak, and the birds of prey are free to be lambs:–in this way, they gain the right to make the birds of prey *responsible* for being birds of prey (*GM*: I.13).[26]

Yet, it is precisely this passage that reveals the potential for Nietzsche's analysis to be extended beyond his own intentions. Nietzsche views vengeful ascriptions of responsibility as a "weapon of the weak," a means by which the suffering can gain power over the physically more powerful. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, however, such narratives of personal responsibility are used as much, if not more, to maintain existing social and economic hierarchies. To inoculate the existing set of social, political, and economic structures from critique, these narratives are deployed to cast those currently suffering the majority of the costs of this order as personally responsible for their own suffering. Brown's analysis helpfully locates Nietzsche's analysis of resentment as constitutive of liberal individualism: "the prior presumption of the self-reliant and self-made capacities of liberal subjects, conjoined with their unavowed dependence on and construction by a variety of social relations and forces, that makes *all* liberal subjects, and not only markedly disenfranchised ones, vulnerable to ressentiment."[27] The desire to simultaneously provide a meaningful narrative of the world as populated by autonomous, responsible individuals and absolve themselves and the existing social order from complicity with injustice generates a discursive reversal. The figure of the "White Angry Male" emerges as the man of *resentment* par excellence, his loss of social primacy being the suffering lacking an accountable agent.[28]

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[26] Robert C. Solomon clarifies that these types that Nietzsche identifies should not be construed as natural kinds, but as a function of psychological relationship. Robert C. Solomon, "One Hundred Years of *Ressentiment*: Nietzsche's *Geneaology of Morals*," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy O Fmorals*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 107-14.

[27] Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments," *Political Theory* 21, no. 3: 400-01. Brown's argument contains more specific implications, additionally, concerning the ways that resentment can circumscribe the emancipatory claims of politicized identities.

[28] Jeffrey T. Nealon articulates this phenomenon clearly: "The resentful subject who is the WAM, for example, ignores the angry affirmation of the sociopolitical dicethrow and tires instead to argue that someone else has rigged the table before the game even started. Immigrants, Affirmative Action Recipients, FemiNazis, Liberal Media Moguls, the UN: they supposedly rule the field, and refuse the recognition of the WAM's expropriation." Jeffrey T. Nealon, "Performing Resentment: White Male Anger; or, "Lack" and Nietzschean Political Theory," in *Why Nietzsche Still? Reflections on Drama,*

The pathological link between responsibility and revenge is further intensified by the inherent failure of moralistic thinking to fully account for the world. W This inability to fully account for suffering, to fully account for and settle debts, because time itself cannot be reversed, becomes an existential condition of indebtedness that constantly torments the will, stoking resentment.

If no external agent can be found, the psychological need for accountability becomes an internalized guilt. As Zarathustra continues, "And because in willing itself there is suffering, based on its inability to will backward — thus all willing and all living is supposed to be — punishment! And now cloud upon cloud rolled over in the spirit, until at last madness preached: 'Everything passes away, therefore everything deserves to pass away" (*TSZ*: "Redemption"). Life itself, and the inherent suffering that occurs when the frustration of the will shatters the illusion of omnipotence, is viewed as an ontological debt. The search for a responsible agent is in vain: moving from "his ancestor who is now burdened with a curse ('Adam,' original sin,' 'the will in bondage')" to "nature," to "existence in general, which is left standing as *inherently worthless*" finally to God himself in the figure of Christ-crucified (*GM*: II.21). [29]

The futility of the drive to responsibility becomes an eternal "will to torment oneself:" "In 'God' he [man] seizes upon the ultimate antithesis he can find to his reel and irredeemable animal

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Culture, and Politics, ed. Alan D. Schrift (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 278. Connolly makes a similar argument: "Think of white working-class males. They are subjected to a variety of disciplines and burdens that limit their prospects for life, but liberal programs devised since the I 960s tend to treat them as responsible for their own achievements and failures. And they are then told by liberals that many women and minorities suffer injustice if they do not rise to or above working-class levels of attainment. Liberal representatives inadvertently manipulate the rhetoric of self-responsibility and justice in ways that assault the identity of this constituency. By implying that professional and corporate males have earned their position while asserting that women and minorities are victimized by discrimination, liberals imply that only one group deserves to be stuck in the crummy jobs available to it: white working-class males. The liberal glorification of self responsibility, juridical justice, and welfare together thus accentuates the resentment of those whose identity is most immediately threatened by its ameliorative programs." Connolly, *Identity\Difference*, 78.

[29] This places Nietzsche's account of indebtedness in contrast to Heidegger's. See: Gary Shapiro, "Debts Due and Overdue: Beginnings of Philosophy in Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Anaximander," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's on the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

instincts, he reinterprets these self-same-animal instincts as debt/guilt before God," who becomes

"God-the-Judge [and] God-the Hangman, as the beyond, as eternity, as torture without end, as hell,

as immeasurable punishment and guilt" (*GM*: II.22).[30] The need to find a responsible agent, to

relieve the rage against time, to find a target for *resentment* culminate in the identification of a sinful

and guilty other, whether in another individual or in one's own passions and instincts. The need to

settle all accounts in the last instance creates a continual hatred of the uncertainties and

contingencies of life, as well as a constant need to purge any threat to this accounting process.[31]

Rather than alleviating the vengeful drive to ascribe guilt and blame to others, this moral

world-order intensifies it. To relieve this existential guilt, individuals seek a guilty agent towards

whom they can redirect their own resentment of the human condition. Those outside of dominant

moral norms or structures of social recognition become easy targets.[32] Those who do not meet

accepted norms of self-responsibility are cast as sinful, and as committing "*the greatest crime against*

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[30] Similarly, in *Twilight*, he describes Christian morality as one that "combats the passions with excision in every sense of the word" whose goal is always "castration." This morality, according to Nietzsche, "has at all times laid the emphasis of its discipline on extirpation […] But to attack the passions at their roots means to attack life at its roots: the practice of the Church is *hostile to life*" (*TI*: "Morality," 1).[30] Nietzsche further develops this argument in *The Antichrist*. Expanding on the *Genealogy*'s diagnosis of *ressentiment* he argues that such a morality premised on rejecting "all that represents the *ascending* movement of life" requires the invention of "*another* world from which that *life-affirmation* would appear evil, reprehensible as such" (*A*: 24). The moral world-order, by postulating a moral world antagonistic to the physical world in which all debts are repaid through divine justice, becomes a "fundamental degradation of the imagination, as an 'evil eye' for all things" (*A*: 25). Morality ceases to be "the expression of the conditions under which a nation lives and grows" (*A*: 25), but is spiritualized into a means of repaying metaphysical debts to God (*A*: 26). Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Antichrist," in *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ* (New York: Penguin, [1895] 1990). All subsequent citations to *The Antichrist* are noted as *A* in the text.

[31] Nietzsche contends that this form of thinking permeates even secularized visions of justice, and he also believes that Kantianism and modern science are just as complicit in this worldview (*GM*: III.25). See also: Mathias Risse, "The Second Treatise in *on the Genealogy of Morality*: Nietzsche on the Origin of Bad Conscience," *European Journal of Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (2001): 68-69.

[32] Connolly summarizes this dynamic: "People tend to demand […] a world in which suffering is ultimately grounded in proportional responsibility. We resent a world in which it appears that it is not so. But resentment must locate an appropriate object if it is to be discharged as resentment. It hereby seeks a *responsible* agent that it can convince itself is worthy of receiving the load of incipient resentment it carries. Otherwise its existential rancor must be stored or translated into something else. So, part of the drive to insistent attributions of responsibility flows from existential resentment. […] we invest existential resentment in human beings whom we define as agents. We inflate human responsibility in order to release resentment against the human condition." *Identity\Difference*, 121. While I draw heavily upon Connolly's work in my reading of Nietzsche, I am critical of aspects of his political proposals. See the discussion in Chapter 2.

humanity" (*A*: 49). Therefore, though Nietzsche could understandably not anticipate the ways in which discourses and tropes of moral responsibility came to be deployed in the 20th century, his critical account of moral responsibility provides a compelling psychological diagnosis of these discursive moves as rooted in dynamics of resentment, revenge, and responsibility.

Furthermore, Nietzsche's account of the nihilistic culmination of the moral world-order can be helpfully rendered in political terms. Its temporal focus — assigning responsibility for past wrongs — becomes, as Zarathustra describes, an obsession with the past that only intensifies feelings of impotence and powerlessness. This obsession with balancing the past forecloses any action towards the future; as the past can never be fully accounted for, such action is always postponed. Furthermore, the constant insistence that individuals will be called to account for their actions and any moral deviancy punished, actively discourages the risk-taking political action requires. Following Dana Villa's reading, moralized personal responsibility "is a lighter burden for those who abstain from action; indeed, it turns their abstention into a kind of virtue. For the man predisposed to manifest his virtues in action, to individualize himself through the *performance* of great or noble deeds, such accountability shifts the standard of judgment of action away from its beauty or greatness toward its presumably disruptive consequences for the social whole."[33] Knowing that they will be held personally responsible discourages the risk taking required of political action, and instead turns political subjects inward.

III- "A Reverse Experiment Should be Possible:" Recovering Responsibility's Remainders

Nietzsche's critical history of moral responsibility may seem to recreate the predicament of Chapter 2, in which discourses of moral responsibility are so ubiquitous that few, if any, alternatives

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[33] Dana Villa, "Democratizing the *Agon*: Nietzsche, Arent, and the Agonistic Tendency in Recent Political Theory," in *Why Nietzsche Still? Reflections on Drama, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 228.

remain. Zarathustra appears to intensify this dilemma, stating: "Oh, this is my sorrow, reward and punishment have been lied into the ground of things — and now even into the ground of your souls, you virtuous" (*TSZ*: "Virtuous")! However, Nietzsche's genealogy of moral values not only traces the history of moral values but also serves as immanent critiques, uncovering the hidden contradictions, paths not taken, and disavowed potentialities within dominant moral discourses. As he writes in the *Genealogy*, "All great things bring about their own demise through an act of self-sublimation: that is the law of life, the law of *necessary* 'self-overcoming' in the essence of life" (*GM*: III.27). Nietzsche's genealogical project seeks to encourage this self-overcoming of existing values by revealing and intensifying their internal tensions and contradictions. Bringing these to the fore works to expand political imagination, decentering dominant political visions and experimenting with varied perspectives. Thus, despite Wolin's own reservations, Nietzsche's thought can contribute to the analysis of political imagination.

To this end, it is important to remember that for Nietzsche, concepts and moral values are built upon "moving foundations, or even, one might say, on flowing water" (*TL*: 1). The values through which we interpret the world and render it meaningful are not only "falsifications" (*TI*: "Reason," 2), but always generate epistemological remainders. These stem not from a Kantian distinction between numina and phenomena, but from the innumerable alternative perspectives that might provide different interpretations: "In so far as the word 'knowledge' has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is *interpretable* otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. — 'Perspectivism' (*WP*: 481). Similar to Freeden's account of political thinking as a constantly frustrated "quest for finality,"[34] in a world of "*competing finalities*" (25), Nietzsche

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[34] Freeden, *Political Theory of Political Thinking*, 22.

recognizes that any judgment of the world is a simplification that generates remainders precisely because there is no final answer in a world that consists only in competing perspectives.

As such, narratives of personal responsibility, despite their ubiquity and depth, can never achieve the finality to which they portend. The multifaceted nature of the world, whether conceived of as Nietzsche's "will to power" or as competing contestable political visions, inscribes an inherent instability into any political judgment. Nietzsche's genealogical critique of personal responsibility function to expose the fissures and remainders in moralistic interpretations of the world, by generating twin commitments to naturalism and autonomy that both come into conflict and point outside of the moral world-order. Furthermore, his genealogies simultaneously perform an alternative form of accounting that makes sense of the world without attempting trace all events to a single responsible agent.

The very practice of genealogy challenges understandings of the world in terms of distinct causes and effects arranged in a linear fashion.[35] In contrast, genealogy suggests a far more contingent, dispersed, and emergent image of history. Where the "genealogical hypotheses" of the "*English kind*" offer clear functionalist accounts of moral values (*GM*: P.4), Nietzsche attends to how

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[35] Jacqueline Stevens argues that Nietzsche's method should not be considered genealogy, and that his title was chosen as a provocative critique of the socio-biological theories of Strauss and Rée. Instead, Nietzsche "reverses Rée's causal universe. Abstract instincts do not determine moral concepts, but historical material conditions, such as debt, give rise to and then alter concepts, giving them different meanings at different times." Jacqueline Stevens, "On the Morals of Genealogy," *Political Theory* 31, no. 4 (2003): 572-73. For Stevens, the idea of a Nietzschean genealogy stems from misreadings by Deleuze and Foucault that became entrenched through disciplinary disputes (577-582). I largely agree with Steven's characterization of Nietzsche's argument in the *Genealogy*, but I follow the literature and refer to Nietzsche's approach as a "genealogical.". In one of the few responses to Stevens, David Owen maintains that Nietzsche's method should be understood as both a critique of Rée's "inverted and perverted" genealogy and an account of "genealogy conducted properly." See: David Owen, *Nietzsche's on the Genealogy of Morality* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2007), 165, n1. On these points it is helpful to note changes in Nietzsche's thinking. In earlier writing he praises Rée's work as "incisive and penetrating analyses of human action" (*HH*: 37), and traces the development of morality to "purpose and utility" (*HH*: 94) as well as the preservation of the community (*HH*: 96). Already in *Daybreak*, published one year before his friendship with Rée ended, Nietzsche begins to shift his thinking: "When one has demonstrated that a thing is of the highest utility, one has however thereby taken not one step towards explaining its origin" (*D*: 37). The *Genealogy* contains Nietzsche's strongest condemnation of Rée: "I have, perhaps, never read anything to which I said 'no', sentence by sentence and deduction by deduction, as I did to this book" (*GM*: P4). Owen traces the development of Nietzsche's critique of morality in: "Nietzsche, Re-Evaluation, and the Turn to Genealogy," in *Nietzsche's on the Genealogy of Morals: Critical Essays*, ed. Christa Davis Acampora (Lantham, MD: Rowman & Littlefied, 2006).

moral values emerge out of a confluence of social, material, cultural, and biological circumstances, and are thus neither universal nor inevitable.

Such attention reveals moral values and social practices as the emergent results of social conflicts, reversals, reinterpretations, and transformations rather than the effect of discreet causes. As he writes in the *Genealogy*:

> everything that occurs in the organic world consist of overpowering, dominating, and in their turn overpowering and dominating consist of re-interpretation, adjustment, in the process of which their former 'meaning' and 'purpose' must necessarily be obscured or completely obliterated […] Every purpose and use is just a *sign* that the will to power has achieved mastery over something less powerful, and has impressed upon it its own idea of a use function; and the whole history of a 'thing', and organ, a tradition can to this extent be a continuous chain of signs, continually revealing new interpretations and adaptations, the causes of which need not be connected amongst themselves, but rather sometimes just follow and replace one another at random. The 'development' of a thing […] is a succession of more or less profound, more or less mutually independent process of subjugation exacted on the thing, added to this the resistances encountered every time, the attempted transformations for the purposes of defense and reaction, and the results, too, of successful countermeasures. The form is fluid, the 'meaning' even more so… (*GM*: II.12).

Here, it is clear that he understands power and domination as processes of (re)interpretation through which meaning evolves and becomes settled. Systems of practices and meanings evolve by struggling to subdue, incorporate, and adapt to competing value systems. This competitive account denies both teleological explanations and functionalist explanations that mistake purposes for origins. It is only through a long history of various transformations and subjugations of competing values that value systems, beliefs, and practices acquire settled meanings that can approximate purposes.

Therefore, it is a mistake to understand Nietzschean genealogy in the traditional sense of the word; singular lines of descent are impossible to draw.[36] Nietzsche's account of the origins of

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[36] On this point, Daniel W. Conway is helpful: "a Nietzschean genealogy is successful not if it achieves or approximates objective validity, but if it effectively supplants or discredits the dominant interpretation of the historical phenomenon in

responsibility itself enacts an alternative sense of account giving. Moral responsibility cannot be traced back to the result of a single causal moment or volitional decision, but emerges slowly and contingently from a confluence of social forces, practices, and meanings. This locates agency above and beyond the individual, demonstrating the productivity of social structures. Thus, he contends that "there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; 'the doer' is invented as an afterthought, the doing is everything" (*GM*: I.13) It is a mistake to read his *Genealogy* as attempting to ascribe responsibility for the moral world-order to any one individual group, be it Jews, Christians, "slaves," "priests," "scientists," "pale atheists," Dühring, Reé, Kant, or Schopenhauer. Instead it is only in conflict and communion with each other, mediated by social institutions and structures, that such moral values emerge. Reality and temporality are reinterpreted in terms of processes in constant flux and interrelation rather than discrete objects in discernable units of time.[37]

Read in this light, genealogy also becomes a responsibility for those who seek to understand or explain the world. The genealogical project of continually reckoning with our past and challenging our own perceptions of the world allows us to reinterpret and potentially repurpose existing values and practices. By revealing displaced alternatives, counter-narratives, and paths not taken, the genealogical approach makes possible the recovery of different meanings of responsibility that can challenge its moralization.[38] Genealogy reinterprets our relationship to the past, by helping us to see

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question." Daniel W. Conway, "Genealogy and Critical Method," in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's on the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 324.

[37] I am indebted to John Richardson's reconstruction of Nietzsche's theory of becoming, and how it differs from traditional theories of becoming. John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), Chapter 2.

[38] Or as, Foucault puts it: "Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things […] On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion, it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations, or conversely the complete reversals, the errors, the false appraisals, the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents." Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 81.

the interconnectivity of all that is. This temporality rejects personal responsibility, insisting instead that "one is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one is the whole […] *this alone is the great liberation* — thus alone is the *innocence* of becoming restored" (*TI*: "Errors," 8). It is only by freeing the past from the myths of linear causality and intentional action, can the innocence of time and historical change be restored. No longer subject to the moralistic evaluations of guilt or debt, the history of morality becomes a depository of alternative meanings and interpretations, and archive for creative revaluation.

Turning to Nietzsche's genealogy of moral responsibility itself, his critique emphasizes two points of internal tension within the moral world-order's system of value: the allure of a naturalistic explanation of the world in its entirety and the conception of an autonomous and sovereign individual. Both of these values are generated by the commitment to moral responsibility, but ultimately come into conflict with the moral world-order. To encourage and intensify this conflict and undermine the universality of the moral world-order, Nietzsche inhabits both of these values – naturalism and autonomy – as experimental perspectives, seeking to encourage the self-overcoming of moral responsibility.

Nietzsche identifies a surprising source in the drive to render the world in terms of natural science: the belief in moral responsibility. Where contemporary philosophers see these at odds, Nietzsche shows how they descend from the same impulse. As he writes in *Twilight*:

> We have always believed we know what a cause is: but whence did we derive our knowledge, more precisely our belief we possessed this knowledge? From the realm of the celebrated 'inner facts' […] We believed ourselves to be causal agents in the act of willing; we at least thought we were there *catching causality in the act*. […] we had *created* the world on the basis of it as a world of causes, as a world of will, as a world of spirit" (*TI*: "Errors," 3; see also: *BGE*: 12).

In deriving "the entire concept from the subjective conviction that *we* are causes, namely, that the arm moves" (*WP*: 551), an entire form of explanation is developed: a positivist model that divides

the world into causes and effects, tracing the latter to the former. The underlying drive is the same one that underpins ascriptions of responsibility: "I notice something and seek a reason for it" (*WP*: 550) and thus "Our 'understanding of an event' has consisted in our inventing a subject which was made responsible for something that happens and for how it happens" (*WP*: 551).[39]

While rooted in the same moralistic impulse, naturalistic interpretations of the world come to disrupt the moral world order. Faith in causal tracing exposes the prejudice in stopping at the agent of a deed. In *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, Nietzsche raises the question, "If one in this way punishes or rewards a man's past as well […] one ought to go back even further and reward or punish the causes of such or such a past, I mean parents, educators, society, etc. […] It is capricious to halt at the criminal if what one is punishing is the past" (*WS*: 28). This turn against moral thinking slowly expands. Writing in *Daybreak,* Nietzsche argues, "In the same measure as the sense for causality increases, the extent of the domain of morality decreases" (*D*: 10).[40] The desire to understand the world purely in terms of causes and effects slowly erodes the belief in supernatural causes — God, angels, demons, the soul, etc. — and eventually turns against the freedom of the will. Thus, Nietzsche praises the power of science to overcome moralistic thinking in *Beyond Good and Evil*, calling on humanity "hardened by the discipline of science [*Zucht der Wissenschaft*]" to stand "with courageous Oedipus eyes and sealed up Odysseus ears, deaf to the lures of the old metaphysical bird catchers who have been whistling to him for far too long: 'You are more! You are

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[39] Justin Remhof describes this as Nietzsche's "social constructivist" account of causality. He writes, "Nietzsche argues that comprehending causality requires ideal objects and reference to our individuating activities. For Nietzsche, causal sequences in scientific explanation would not be what they are in a world independent of human concern. Causality is a phenomenon that must be understood as essentially related to our interpretative action." Justin Remhof, "Naturalism, Causality, and Nietzsche's Conception of Science," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 46, no. 1 (2015): 115.

[40] The passage continues: "for each time one has understood the necessary effects and has learned how to segregate them from all accidental effects and incidental consequences (*post hoc*), one has destroyed a countless number of *imaginary causalities* hitherto believed in as the foundations of customs […]"

higher! You have a different origin" (*BGE*: 230)![41] The "unconditional will to truth," rooted in the

moral world-order, necessarily turns on itself bringing into question its own metaphysical

presuppositions.

This is not to suggest that Nietzsche believes in a reductive naturalism that aims at

eliminating folk psychological convictions.[42] After all, Nietzsche himself warns against totalistic

descriptions of nature that would attribute "to it heartlessness or unreason or their opposites […] In

no way do our aesthetic and moral judgments apply to it" (*GS*: 109; see also: *GS*: 373; *BGE*: 12; *WP*:

689)! Instead, Nietzsche believes that naturalistic explanations demonstrate the inconsistency and

instability of the moralistic worldview turning against itself. His own natural histories of morality

continue this theme, attempting to account for moral values and social practices without appealing

to metaphysical or supernatural explanations.[43] His warning that "physics too is only an

interpretation and arrangement of the world (according to ourselves! If I may say so) and *not* an

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[41] It is important to note that *Zucht* means discipline in the sense of cultivation or breeding rather than a taxonomic discipline. Science provides a discipline that teaches us to treat metaphysical and moral worldviews with suspicion rather than providing an objective picture of the world. Similarly, Janaway contends that Nietzsche's argument in this passage is not that scientific inquiry itself will rid us of metaphysical interpretations of reality, but that philosophers must emulate the hardness of scientists and refuse to fall prey to the temptation to fall back upon moral or metaphysical. Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*, 25.

[42] Brian Leiter is emblematic of this view. Drawing on Nietzsche's reading of the German Materialist movement, Leiter reads Nietzsche as an "M-Naturalist," or comprising a "commitment to scientific method, rather than exclusive commitment to particular scientific paradigms," such that scientific explanations should be prioritized. Leiter, "Fatalism and Self-Creation," 241. Though Leiter contends that Nietzsche critiques reductive naturalism (245) his theory of type-facts that are the true causal determinants of action (234) points towards a much more reductive account than Leiter is willing to admit.

[43] Or in Pippin's formulation: "One of the things natural organic beings can do, must do, is to create all sorts of different institutions under varying circumstances." *Nietzsche, Psychology, & First Philosophy*, 4. See also: Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*, 22-23, Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness*, 34-53 and Peter Sedgwick, "Nietzsche, Normativity, and Will to Power," *Nietzsche-Studien* 36 (2007). This position is similar Clark and Daniel Dudrick's argument that Nietzsche maintains a space of reasons irreducible to scientific explanation. See: Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, "The Naturalisms of *Beyond Good and Evil*," in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006); "Nietzsche on the Will: An Analysis of Bge 19," in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, ed. Ken Gemes and Simon May (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

explanation of the world" (*BGE*: 14), offers a stark rejoinder against reading Nietzsche as committed

to naturalism as a metaphysical thesis.[44]

The commitment to moral responsibility also creates its own possibilities for revision by

instilling the modern commitment to autonomy, as seen in Nietzsche's discussion of the "sovereign

individual" in *Genealogy* II. This figure appears as the "ripest" (*GM*: II.2) and latest (*GM*: II.3) fruit of

the "long history of the origins of *responsibility*. That particular task of breeding an animal with the

prerogative to promise (*GM*: II.2). The same violent practices of punishment intended to make

human beings "*reliable, regular, necessary*" ultimately create an individual who "is answerable for his

own *future*" (*GM*: II.1)! Such an individual is an "autonomous, supra-ethical individual," possessing

"an enduring unbreakable will" "his own *standard of value*," and "the extraordinary privilege of

responsibility [*Verantwortlichkeit*], the consciousness of this rare freedom and power over himself" (*GM*:

II.2). The creation of a responsible individual also creates its modern correlate of an autonomous

individual, capable of self-reflection and thus able to determine values for himself.

The rhetoric surrounding this figure has led scholars, such as Ken Gemes and João

Constâncio, to interpret the "sovereign individual" as Nietzsche's aspirational ideal: the rare

individual capable of autonomously choosing and taking responsibility for his own values.[45] In

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[44] My understanding of Nietzsche's naturalism is further informed Christoph Cox who insists that Nietzsche's "naturalism" must always be understood as an interpretative practice, Richard Schact who contends that Nietzsche's prioritizes the experimental and provisional nature of natural science, and Acampora who interprets Nietzsche's naturalism in artistic terms. See: Christoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Richard Schacht, "Nietzsche's Naturalism," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012); Christa Davis Acampora, "Naturalism and Nietzsche's Moral Psychology," in *The Blackwell Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson (Hoboken, NJ: Blackwell Publishers Inc, 2006).

[45] Gemes uses this figure to distinguish "deserts" free will, which is used to praise and blame, and "agency" free will, which distinguishes actions from mere occurrences. Ken Gemes, "Nietzsche on Free Will, Autonomy, and the Sovereign Individual," in *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*, ed. Ken Gemes and Simon May (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33. Whereas the former, requires a "will autonomous from the causal order," which Nietzsche rejects (36), the latter can be made consistent with a commitment to naturalism. In this reading, Nietzsche gives "a positive, naturalist account of agency free will" in which "under the right conditions genuine agency, a truly great achievement, is possible, albeit only for a special few" (41). Replacing Kantian universal autonomy, Gemes' Nietzsche "wishes to promote the development of genuine individuals" and "endorses agency free will as an aspiration" (47). Constâncio similarly argues that the sovereign individual seeks to reinterpret modernity's prioritization of autonomy. Drawing on Nietzsche's other

addition to questions of translation that complicate this reading,[46] I argue that Nietzsche is being far

subtler with this figure. When read in the context of the rest of *Genealogy* II.1-3, the "sovereign

individual" appears less a future ideal than the idealized self-conception of modern liberalism.

Nietzsche invokes the images of sovereignty and autonomy to identify modernity's own aspirations

of individualism and self-legislation. However, he then emphasizes the "blood torments and

sacrifices […] the most disgusting mutilations" that were required to breed such a creature (*GM*:

II.3) Thus Nietzsche seeks to undermine the modern, and in particular Kantian, valuation of

autonomy.[47] By showing both responsibility's historical contingency as well as the "price [that] had

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discussions of freedom, Constâncio contends that Nietzsche "contrasts his concept of freedom with the liberal concept of freedom" and "does not conceive either of freedom or responsibility in terms of rational choice and deliberation." João Constâncio, "'A Sort of Schema of Ourselves': On Nietzsche's 'Ideal' and 'Concept' of Freedom," *Nietzsche-Studien* 41 (2012): 149. Sovereign individuals, endowed with the power to remember and make promises, can "follow their own conscience," "create their own goals," and "reshape on their own the goals of society" (154). These rare human beings emerge, but are distinct, from common humanity (155), and, in contrast to Kantian autonomy, are autonomous in virtue of their ability to create laws for themselves, rather than bind themselves to the moral law (156).

[46] Much of this debate turns on how one reads Nietzsche's account of conscience, which he views as the "dominant instinct" that constitutes the sovereign individual's "privilege of *responsibility*" (*GM*: II.2). The key passage describes the sovereign individual as "a man with his own, independent, enduring will, whose *prerogative it is to promise* [*den Menschen des eignen unabhängigen langen Willens, der versprechen darf*]" (*GM*: II.2). This phrase, *der versprechen darf*, is ambiguous and has been translated differently. Kauffman translates it as a "right to make promises." Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, [1887] 1989). Clark and Swensen translate it as: "permitted to promise." *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, [1887] 1998). In their editorial notes, Clark and Swensen explain their translation as follows: "We have translated this phrase as literally as possible here to underscore its *normative* character while at the same time avoiding connotations that are absent from N's German. 'That may promise' might be more literal still, but too ambiguous and confusing, given that the 'permission' sense of 'may' is far from its most common sense […] 'who is able to make promise' obscures the fact that N is using a normative or value-laden term ('may' or 'is permitted') to describe the task of breeding a normative animal, an animal that accepts and lives up to norms" (139). By translating *dürfen* as a right, rather than capacity or permission, the meaning of this phrase shifts from a description of a power to its idealization Acampora links this misreading to philosophers reading their own prejudices about the centrality of promise-making to human ethical life into Nietzsche's writing. See: Christa Davis Acampora, "On Sovereignty and Overhumanity- Why It Matters How We Read Nietzsche's *Genealogy* Ii: 2," in *Nietzsche's on the Genealogy of Morals: Critical Essays*, ed. Christa Davis Acampora (New York: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 148-50. Matthew Rukgaber and Daniel Harris provide additional evidence by comparing Nietzsche's discussion of the sovereign individual in *Genealogy* to competing accounts of sovereignty and autonomy in his published writings and *Nachlass*, in which both ideas are objects of critique. Matthew Rukgaber, "The "Sovereign Individual and the "Ascetic Ideal": On a Perennial Misreading of the Second Essay of Nietzsche's on the Genealogy of Morality," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012). Daniel Harris, "Nietzsche's Social Account of Responsibility," *Southwest Philosophy Review* 28, no. 1 (2012).

[47] This may seem odd given that Nietzsche explicitly describes the autonomous sovereign individual as the "supra-ethical individual [*das autonome übersittliche Individuum*] (because 'autonomous' [*autonom*] and 'ethical'[*sittlich*] are mutually exclusive)" (*GM*: II.2). This seems to challenge Kant's claim that the "principle of autonomy [*Autonomy*] is the sole principle of morals [*Moral*]." Immanuel Kant, "Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals " in *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals with on a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns* (Indianpolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, [1785] 1993), 45. Yet Kant's argument in the *Grounding* is precisely that the moral law is freely legislated for and by the

to be paid" for "reason, solemnity, mastering of emotions, this really dismal things called reflection, all these privileges and splendors man has" (*GM*: II.3), Nietzsche shows these values to be historical constructions. They may promise enormous benefits, but they are purchased at high costs.[48]

Yet Nietzsche does not treat this development with pure contempt.[49] Not only are responsibility and autonomy normative achievements, but, adding an additional level of nuance, they generate another source of instability within the moral world-order. Though a product of moral systems that require absolute obedience, the sovereign individual realizes that moral standards have an all too human, rather than transcendent, ground. Now capable of responsibility, of being answerable for their own lives, deeds, and values, individuals are able to challenge the moral world-order's values by claiming their own standards of value. Thus, in a typically Nietzschean fashion, the results of moralistic value systems create their own instability. The system of moral responsibility creates a subject beyond its control, responsible for itself rather than to a transcendent moral law.

Nietzsche's genealogies not only reveal the excesses and remainders overflowing from the moral world-order, but also the internal tensions it generates. Systems of moral responsibility both instill values of naturalism and autonomy which turn against the dominance of a transcendent moral law and come into conflict with each other. Nietzsche reveals the inherent tension between

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self, not imposed by alien custom; the structure of the *Grounding* can be read as a conversion experience that moves from understanding *Sitten* as external constraints to the realization of the self-legislative authority of human beings. The transitions in the *Grounding*—from "Ordinary to Philosophical Knowledge of Morality" and from "Popular Moral Philosophy to a Metaphysics of Morals"—point to a conversion from common moral reasoning and popular philosophy, which are both premised on moral evasion, to an understanding of the self as a rational being as the true ground of *Sitten*. See also: Shallini Satkunanandan, "The Extraordinary Categorical Imperative," *Political Theory* 39, no. 2 (2011). Therefore, in a sense, Kantian autonomy is also supra-ethical, premised on self-legislation. Just as Nietzsche's sovereign individual must emerge from the "morality of custom [*Sittlichkeit der Sitte*]" as "master of the free will" (*GM*: II.2), so too must Kant's rational person transition from identifying moral duty as an imposition to realizing the will's "own commanding authority as the supreme legislation." Kant, "Grounding," 45.

[48] On this point see: Acampora, "Sovereignty and Over-humanity," 157-158. Additionally, she writes: "It is a serious mistake to read [the sovereign individual] as *Nietzsche's* future ideal, for, when one does so, one remains blind to the fact that the sovereign individual is the ultimate product of the process of moralization whose possible overcoming"

[49] I reject Leiter's deflationary readings of the "sovereign individual" as either an ironic depiction of liberalism or an accident of nature. See: Brian Leiter, "Who Is the "Sovereign Individual"? Nietzsche on Freedom," in *Nietzsche's on the Genealogy of Morality: A Critical Guide*, ed. Simon May (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

modernity's commitments to both natural science and individual sovereignty. Nietzsche encourages such tension as an impetus for creating new values. Rather than treating this "magnificent tension of the spirit" like liberalism and pietism does, "as need and distress," Nietzsche treats the tensions and remainders of modernity as an opportunity: "with so tense a bow we can now shoot for the most distant goals." What is needed is "the arrow, the task, and — who knows? — the *goal*" (*BGE*: P).[50] As will become clear, Nietzsche's revaluation of responsibility seeks to provide such a goal.

IV-From Revenge to Generosity: The Temporality of Responsibility

Insofar as Zarathustra locates the psychological roots of revenge in "the will's unwillingness [*Widerwille*] toward time and time's 'it was,'" to revalue responsibility in different affective terms requires a reinterpretation of time itself.[51] This is the dominant theme of *Zarathustra* — "That will which is the will to power must will something higher than any reconciliation [with time]" (*TSZ*: "Redemption") — but this project occupies other aspects of Nietzsche's thought as well. In this and the next sections, I reconstruct Nietzsche's temporal reorientation of responsibility from resentment against time's passage towards a taking of responsibility for the future. Though staunchly future-oriented, Nietzsche's image of the eternal recurrence of the same (ERS) offers the reminder that responsibility is always taken and enacted in time, rather than signaling an escape from time's flow. This responsibility, which I call "anticipatory responsibility," is described in *Beyond Good and Evil* as the philosopher's responsibility to create values that facilitate human flourishing and is performed in the wanderings, teachings, and transformation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*'s titular character.

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[50] Similarly, he writes in *Ecce Homo*: "For the task of a *revaluation of all values* more capacities may have been needed than have ever dwelt together in a single individual–above all, even contrary capacities that had to be kept from disturbing, destroying one another." (*EH*: "Clever," 9).

[51] Del Caro translates *Widerwille* as "unwillingness," but it could also be translated as antipathy or aversion.

My emphasis on *Zarathustra* may strike one as odd, given that neither the word "responsibility" [*Verantwortlichkeit*] nor "accountability" [*Zurechnungsfähigkeit*] appear in the text.[52] As will become clear, I interpret *Zarathustra* as the poetic enactment of the philosopher's responsibility described in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and as the figure who enunciates the counter-ideal to the moral world-order called for in the *Genealogy*.[53] The poetic form of *Zarathustra* is crucial to Nietzsche's project of reorganizing the affective relationships underpinning narratives of responsibility. If, as Acampora writes, "there is just no way to make the metaphor of the responsible causal agent work, for it to grip us," then *Zarathustra* may provide the "different depiction, a different conception of what is at work and what options are available for pursuit."[54] Because Nietzsche thinks of the philosopher as simultaneously an experiment and a temptation (*BGE*: 42), *Zarathustra's* narrative form and poetic language seduce the reader into Nietzsche's experiments while simultaneously working to reshape the reader through Zarathustra's own transformation.[55]

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[52] To risk critiques of esotericism, I am reminded of a line in Borges: "In a riddle whose answer is chess, what is the only prohibited word?" Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths," in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New York: New Directions Books, 1962), 27. On Nietzsche and esotericism, see: Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 4-5.

[53] In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche himself describes *Zarathustra* as the "yes-saying" part of his project to correspond to the "no-saying" books of *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (*EH*: "Beyond Good and Evil," 1). The *Genealogy* serves as a series of preparatory studies, as "above all, a *counterideal* was lacking — *until Zarathustra*" (*EH*: "Genealogy"). Similar enunciations of Zarathustra appear throughout Nietzsche's work (*GS*: 342; *GM*: II.25; *TI*: "Myth"). On the relationship between *Zarathustra* and Nietzsche's other works, see also: Paul S. Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 8; Robert Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 26-27; Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 248-49.

[54] Christa Davis Acampora, "Nietzsche, Agency, and Responsibility: "Das Thun Ist Alles"," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 44, no. 2 (2013): 153.

[55] Robert B. Pippin further argues that the erotic language of *Zarathustra* is crucial to Nietzsche's project, as one's attachments to one's cherished values operates at a nearly erotic level. Pippin, 12-13. Lampert concurs: "Nietzsche came to practice an art of writing aimed at tempering offense and winning over free spirits. That art leads into temptation. It practices the enticements of the tempter god, bewitchingly described at the end of *Beyond Good and Evil*." Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 7. Furthermore, recent scholarship on *Zarathustra* has demonstrated not only the importance but the necessity of interpreting the text with attention to its narrative development. See Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 4-5, Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism*, 22, and Loeb, *Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, 2-6. While I do not provide a systematic chapter-by-chapter interpretation of *Zarathustra*, I endeavor to remain faithful to the position of the passages within their narrative context, and make note of such context where appropriate.

While Nietzsche critiques personal responsibility for being bound up in an affective economy of debt, guilt, and blame, he lauds a more protean and capacious sense of responsibility in the figure of the philosopher. Such individuals have "the most comprehensive responsibility" and bear "the weight of the overall development of humanity" (*BGE*: 61). Those who have the "capacity for responsibility" not only can "guide a knife with assurance and subtly" into existing value systems (*BGE*: 210), but also can "*create values*" for "*true philosophers are commanders and legislators*" (*BGE*: 211). Rather than responding to the world with a resentful drive to control or submitting to existing standards of value, Nietzsche envisions a generous and creative response. To take anticipatory responsibility is to respond to the world with life-affirming values that animate human action and make possible human flourishing.

Given anticipatory responsibility's orientation towards human flourishing, it is necessary to briefly reconstruct Nietzsche's conceptions of flourishing and life-affirmation. The absolutist decrees of the moral world-order have threatened human flourishing precisely because they are life-negating and condemn bodily instincts and passions. Nietzsche describes such morality as "*anti-natural*" (*TI*: "Morality," 4) and "un-selfing," (*EH*: "Destiny," 7), because it militates against the very conditions of life itself. In contrast, based on his understanding of life as will to power – a drive to expand and enhance itself rather than preserve itself (*GS*: 349; *TSZ*: "Self-Overcoming") – a flourishing life is one that aims to enhance, expand, and diversify the drives and passions that constitute one's life. A flourishing life is one in which the individual can enhance, develop, expand, and, most importantly, organize one's capabilities and powers into a coherent and meaningful whole.[56] Such a project is described in *The Gay Science*:

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[56] He thus writes in *The Antichrist*: What is good? – All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? – All that proceeds from weakness. What is happiness? – the feeling that power *increases* – that a resistance is overcome" (*A*: 2).

> *One thing is needful.* – To 'give style' to one's character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan until each appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a great mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of first nature removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. […] In the end, when the work is complete, it becomes clear how it was the force of a single taste that ruled and shaped everything great and small – whether the taste was good or bad means less than one may think; it's enough that it was one taste (*GS*: 290)![57]

The ability to not only enhance one's powers, but to organize them into a meaningful life-project, to find meaning in one's own life, as it is, is crucial to Nietzsche's conception of flourishing. To facilitate human flourishing is to make possible this project: to create and maintain the conditions that allow others to work upon themselves, to enhance their capacities, and to make their own lives a meaningful work of art for themselves. Human flourishing is not to be identified with any a-priori criteria, but as an aspirational goal making possible the individual self-affirmation of their own lives.[58] As the passage continues: "For one thing is needful: that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself."[59] This implies a set of material and social conditions as necessary for enabling individuals to cultivate such a feeling and sense of power.

Human flourishing in this conception can only be accomplished through an affirmative stance toward life that "says yes" to or finds meaning in even the painful and difficult aspects of life. To flourish is to be able to claim ownership, and therefore responsibility, over one's life, even the

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[57] Similarly, he writes in *Ecce Homo*: "For the task of a *revaluation of all values* more capacities may have been needed than have ever dwelt together in a single individual–above all, even contrary capacities that had to be kept from disturbing, destroying one another. An order of rank among these capacities; distance; the art of separating without setting against one another; to mix nothing, to 'reconcile' nothing; a tremendous variety that is nevertheless the opposite of chaos–this was the precondition, the long, secret work and artistry of my instinct" (*EH*: "Clever," 9).

[58] In this vein, Owen describes Nietzsche's ethics as a revisionary form of the Enlightenment concept of maturity, or the ability to determine one's life autonomously. See: David Owen, "Nietzsche, Enlightenment and the Problem of Noble Ethics," in *Nietzsche's Futures*, ed. John Lippitt (London: MacMillan Press, 1999), 24-26.

[59] This approaches Young's conception of social justice: "social justice concerns the degree to which a society contains and supports the institutional conditions necessary for the realization for these values. The values comprised in the good life can be reduced to two very general ones: (1) developing and exercising one's capacities and expressing one's experience, and (2) participating in determining one's action and the conditions of one's actions." *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 37.

aspects beyond one's control, rather than cede that responsibility to a universal moral law outside of the bounds of temporal and physical life. To affirm one's passions, drives, and instincts allows one to find strength from within them; to affirm life as will to power allows one to gain mastery over oneself rather than fleeing from those aspects of one's life and world that one finds unsettling or unsatisfying. This allows one to live a noble and flourishing life: "the use of a rare and singular standard and almost a madness […] a hitting upon values for which the scale has not yet been invented; a sacrifice on altars made for an unknown god; a courage without any desire for honors; a self-sufficiency that overflows and communicates to men and things" (*GS*: 55).[60]

While Nietzsche believes that only a select few – revering Goethe for accomplishing such a task (*TI*: "Expeditions," 49-50) – have been able to reach such flourishing, this is not an elitist conception of self-cultivation. In the first place, his interconnected ontology of will to power entails that "in this condition one enriches everything out of one's own abundance […] The man in this condition transforms things until they mirror his power – until they are reflections of his perfection" (*TI*: "Expeditions," 9; see also: *TSZ*: "Bestowing Virtue"). As such, a community can be said to facilitate flourishing when it empowers its members to realize their own capacities and potentialities, to enhance themselves and master their own wills to power, and to meaningfully determine their place in the world.[61]

Additionally, Nietzsche's conception of flourishing is not oriented around a single substantive ideal, but is based on his conception of life as "that *which must always overcome itself*." Any particular conception of a flourishing or good life is always subject to revision and overcoming: "good and evil that would be everlasting – there is no such thing! They must overcome themselves out of themselves again and again" (*TSZ*: "Self-Overcoming"). Both Nietzsche and Zarathustra

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[60] On this conception of self-mastery, see also: Pippin, *Nietzsche, Psychology, & First Philosophy*, 118-120.
[61] See also: Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, 159-162.

speak of humanity as that which must be constantly remade and overcome (*TSZ*: "Prologue," 3;

EH: "Wise," 8). Human flourishing must not only take into account this conception of humanity as

constantly becoming and overcoming itself, but also promote and facilitate such self-transformation.

While Nietzsche allows for plural conceptions of flourishing, his is not an easy relativism. Values

and projects which inhibit one's self-overcoming and self-transformation are to be excluded in favor

of conceptions of a meaningful life that encourage self-reflection and cultivation. His flourishing

humanity is not a fixed end-point a constant process of renegotiating values to enable humanity to

continually excel and elevate itself.[62]

Finally, Nietzsche speaks of this as a project for humanity as a whole, rather than a solely

individual project. In *Ecce Homo,* he speaks of the moral world-order as a mistake made "*not* as an

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[62] The question of human flourishing cannot be distinguished from the question of Nietzsche's "perfectionism". Rawls famously characterizes Nietzsche as a moral perfectionist as a means of criticizing such a stance as incompatible with liberal democratic politics. He describes Nietzsche's "perfectionism" in the following terms: "The absolute weight that Nietzsche sometimes gives the lives of great men such as Socrates and Goethe is unusual. At places, he says that mankind must continually strive to produce great individuals. We give value to our lives by working for the good of the highest specimens." Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 325. For Rawls, such a conception would violate the importance of equal standing within the original position, making perfectionism an untenable principle of justice (328-329). James Conant provides a helpful and systematic analysis and refutation of the influential Rawlsian characterization. Not only does Conant argue that the Rawlsian interpretations of key passages of Nietzsche's work are unsustainable when contextualized both in the work and Nietzsche's thought as a whole, but he argues that the great individuals to be cultivated are to serve as exemplars through which individuals can develop their capacities and capabilities to reveal their own higher selves. James Conant, "Nietzsche's Perfectionism: A Reading of *Schopenhauer as Educator*," in *Nietzshce's Postmoralism: Essays on Nietzsche's Prelude to Philosophy's Future*, ed. Richard Schacht (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Vanessa Lemm also offers an important rejoinder to the discussion by drawing on Nietzsche's conception of culture to distinguish Nietzsche's perfectionism from Cavell's. In contrast to Cavell's more individualistic and Emersonian conception, Nietzsche's is necessarily intersubjective and public and involves a struggle over collective values and meanings. Vanessa Lemm, "Is Nietzsche a Perfectionist? Rawls, Cavell, and the Politics of Culture in Nietzsche's "Schopenhauer as Educator"," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 34 (2007); Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism: The Carus Lectures, 1988* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). Lemm also links this conception of perfectionism to Nietzsche's sense of responsibility in terms similar to my own: "Each individual's responsibility reflects his or her unique way of responding to a call addressed uniquely to that person" (12). My own position, as will become clear, shifts the emphasis on the object of that response from one's self to the world itself. In this position, I also draw from Owen's conception of Nietzsche's agonal perfectionism, in which self-development requires public and collective contestation. Or, in Owen's words; "it is in and through agonistic engagements *within* and *over* the terms of democratic citizenship that citizens exercise and develop the capacities and dispositions that compose democratic nobility [… and to develop] a will to political self-responsibility, which consists in cultivating one's capacity and disposition for political self-rule." David Owen, "Equality, Democracy, and Self-Respect: Reflections on Nietzsche's Agonal Perfectionism," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, no. 24 (2002): 128. This conception implies a political responsibility to care for and enable the institutional place of public contestation over the terms of public life to allow for human flourishing, which I discuss as a responsibility for the political world.

individual, *not* as a people, but as humanity" (*EH*: "Destiny," 7), suggesting that humanity as a whole needs repair from the damage done by such moralizing thinking. Similarly, in *The Gay Science* he describes a "humanity of the future." "To finally take all this in one soul and compress it into feeling," he writes, "this would surely have to produce a happiness unknown to humanity so far: a divine happiness full of power and love, full of tears and laughter, a happiness which, like the sun in the evening, continually draws on its inexhaustible riches, given them away and pouring them into the sea […] This divine feeling would then be called humanity" (*GS*: 338)! Though Nietzsche detests moralistic attempts to "improve mankind," (*TI*: "Improvers"), his project does contain a normative vision of human flourishing. Rather than conceiving of flourishing in distributive terms or in terms of timeless moral principles, he offers a more fluid conception of flourishing. His conception of human flourishing, in summary, is the ability for humans, as both individuals and communities, to live meaningful lives in which they are able to each develop and enhance their capabilities and potentialities in accords with a set of animating values to which they are genuinely attached.

Therefore, Nietzsche's call to take responsibility for human flourishing through philosophic legislation stands in explicit contrast to the moral world-order. Instead of values that depress human action and target resentment back upon the self, Nietzsche envisions legislating values that expand the powers of action and direct them out into the world. Anticipatory responsibility is an ongoing obligation to ensure that human beings can freely enhance their capacities and create meaningful lives.

It is in this vein that Zarathustra begins his public teaching. In the "Prologue," he challenges the crowd, who long "for the old things to be preserved" who labor under the burdens of the moral world-order, to set themselves a goal" and "plant the seed of their highest hope" (*TSZ*: "Prologue," 5). Similarly, in the "First Part" of the narrative, Zarathustra appeals to his listeners' assumptions

about freedom and responsibility, the dominant self-understanding of modernity, to challenge them

to take up the challenge of revaluation:

> You call yourself free? Your dominating thought I want to hear and not that you
> escaped from a yoke. Are you the kind of person who had the *right* to escape from a
> yoke? There are some who threw away their last value when they threw away their
> servitude. Free from what? What does Zarathustra care! But brightly your eyes
> should signal to me: free *for what*? Can you give yourself your own evil and good and
> hang your will above yourself like a law? Can you be your own judge and the avenger
> of your law (*TSZ*: "Way of the Creator")?

Appealing to the modern desire for freedom, Zarathustra draws his audience towards his own

revaluation of the world and of the value of responsibility.

Throughout the narrative of *Zarathustra*, Zarathustra unites the themes of innocence and

creativity through images of natality and children. While "for the game of creation my brothers a

sacred yes-saying is required" (*TSZ*: "Metamorphoses"), the figure of the child points to more than

just innocence. [63] In later passages, the same image describes the importance of extending one's will

into the future, despite the constant flux of time. Zarathustra asks who "has a *right* to wish for a

child?" For Zarathustra, the right to want children stems from a steadfastness of character and

requires a mastery of one's passions and virtues. As such, he insists: "I want your victory and your

freedom to long for a child. You should build living monuments to your victory and your liberation"

(*TSZ*: "On Child and Marriage"). Similarly, in the "Second Part," he again inquires: "Could you *create*

a god? – then be silent about any gods! But you could well create the overman. Not you yourselves

perhaps, my brothers! But you could recreate yourselves into fathers and forefathers of the overman:

and this shall be your best creating! -" (*TSZ*: "Blessed Isles"). This image directs attention away from

the apparently pressing, yet trivial, present and the smoldering resentment against the past towards

the possibilities offered by the future. In transforming oneself into the "forefathers of the overman,"

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[63] On the dangers of taking this image as Zarathustra's final statement on value-creation, see: Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 35.

Zarathustra describes a form of taking responsibility for the future, of securing and guarding it so that humanity can again better and enhance itself.

This move reorients the moral and affective economy underpinning anticipatory responsibility. In a speech titled, "On the virtuous," Zarathustra contrasts the moralistic obsession with accounting debts and those who "still want to be paid" and "have reward for virtue" with the image of the child. "You love your virtue as the mother her child; but when did anyone ever hear that a mother wanted to be paid for her love? Your virtue is your dearest self." Responsibility is rethought in terms of love and generosity rather than guilt and debt, as he continues, "Grow weary of the words 'reward,' 'retribution,' 'punishment, 'revenge in justice' – Grow weary of saying: 'What makes a deed good is that it is selfless.' Oh my friends! I wish *your* self were in the deed like the mother is in the child: let that be *your* word on virtue" (*TSZ*: "Virtuous")! Rather than isolating individuals through ascriptions of blame, anticipatory responsibility seeks to build individual and collective power through generosity and mutual empowerment.

Therefore, in moving from guilt to generosity, responsibility shifts from an overly individualized value to a capacious social practice. As Acampora writes, "A basic orientation toward gratitude, rather than guilt is found in the agonistic model, and it entails a different sense of responsibility. One can claim responsibility on the basis of achievement, but this includes mindfulness that such achievements are possible, become manifest, meet the conditions for being worthy of truth, only because of others, only by virtue of dependence and *shared* responsibility."[64] Responsibility is therefore reframed in terms of a domain of care and concern rather than a debt to be repaid. Instead of taking responsibility *for* one's deeds and actions, Zarathustra envisions a responsibility *to* or *over* humanity's future by taking responsibility over the meanings of the values

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[64] Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 32. See also Pippin's interpretation of Nietzschean agency taking place in an intersubjective context. *Nietzsche, Psychology & First Philosophy*, 77-82.

around which human life is organized.[65] Rather than the autonomous individual, isolated from the

world, Nietzsche's image of pregnancy attunes us to the ecosystem of forces that predate and outlast

us, within which all of us are imbedded.

This orientation towards the future entails a shift in evaluative criteria beyond the

transcendent standards of the moral world-order. Invoking the image of pregnancy in *Daybreak*,

Nietzsche writes, "*we* have no right to determine either its value or the hour of its coming," which

paradoxically creates "a pure and purifying feeling of profound irresponsibility" (*D*: 552)[66] Freed

from the need to settle moral debts in the last instance, anticipatory responsibility is distinct from

moral accountability. Instead, one has the responsibility to care for and shape the conditions under

which the future – in the figure of the child – emerges in the world, despite our incomplete causal

control over the future. This suggests, following Acampora, that "perhaps what counts for

Nietzsche is whether one's faith in freedom takes a healthy form. Perhaps […] he wants us to stop

assigning responsibility in our (retrospective) judgments but to assume it all the more while we're

(prospectively) deciding and acting."[67]

The new evaluative criteria that anticipatory responsibility demands should not be conceived

of as universal standards to last all time. Instead, given the uncertainty of the future and the constant

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[65] Nietzsche distinguishes this position from Christian charity, however, describing pregnancy as "Ideal selfishness" in *Daybreak* (552) and stating that "where there is great love for oneself it is the hallmark of pregnancy" in *Zarathustra* ("Unwilling Bliss"). On this distinction, see: Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 79. Additionally, this appeals to the human desire for immortality and greatness to motivate a sense of responsibility for humanity as a whole. Hence, Acampora writes, "one might be thought to *live on* to some extent to carry on or extend one's domain of activity through one's children in some limited sense, but each child is at the same time a beginning of something new, a new creation, which is not simply reducible to a product or replica of what gave it birth." Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 182.

[66] Christophe Menke reads Nietzsche's prioritization of the artist in similar terms. The figure of the artist foregrounds "the vitality of movement," which "opens a door through which a moment of unaccountability enters into all action." Christoph Menke, *Force: A Fundamental Concept of Aesthetic Anthropology*, trans. Gerrit Jackson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 91. Gilles Deleuze makes a similar argument: "In Nietzsche the notion of responsibility, even in its higher form, has the limited value of a simple means: the autonomous individual is no longer responsible to justice for his reactive forces […] It is he who speaks, he no longer has to *answer*. The only active sense of responsibility-debt is its disappearing in the movement by which man is liberated." Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, [1962] 1983), 137.

[67] Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 209.

change of circumstances, Zarathustra warns against the temptation of legislating new absolute

criteria.[68] He tells his disciples, "This is *my* good, I love this, thus I like it entirely, thus alone do I

want the good. I do not want it as a divine law, I do not want it as a human statute and requirement.

It shall be no signpost for me to overearths and paradises" (*TSZ*: "Pleasure and Pain"). Taking

responsibility for the future requires legislating values as appropriate for the predicaments one faces

in the context one finds oneself, not in providing a definitive meaning of the human condition that

seeks to settle all questions. Such a project would merely recreate the nihilism of the moral world-

order.[69]

Taking responsibility is not the attempt of moral responsibility to domesticate uncertainty by

identifying specific agents to that can be held accountable, but cultivating practices, institutions,

dispositions, and communities that can withstand and adapt to changing times and circumstances

without succumbing to nihilistic relativism. It replaces the question of "who is to blame for this?"

with questions like "what could humanity become and accomplish?" and "how might our existing

values and practices be repurposed for future goals?" Nietzsche's account of anticipatory

responsibility, through the images of pregnancy and children, directs us towards the future,

reorienting our psychological desire for freedom and immortality away from revenge and resentment

towards the affirmative project of creating new values and building new social practices. While

rejecting moral responsibility's accounting game, Nietzsche articulates a more profound and

capacious sense of responsibility, that of humanity's future flourishing, that must be taken up.

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[68] Satkunanandan describes this sense of responsibility amidst uncertainty as "extraordinary responsibility," which emphasizes "aspects of political life that are unforeseeable and unscripted and require our ongoing attention." *Extraordinary Responsibility*, 7.

[69] Daniel Conway's defense of Nietzsche's moral pluralism underscores this point. See: Daniel W. Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 29-33. See also Adrian Del Caro's account of the "ecumenical Nietzsche" in: Adrian Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), Chapter 5, especially 272-85.

V- The Eternal Recurrence of Responsibility

It is tempting to read such images, along with those of the Overman [*Übermensch*], as signaling a radical break from the past. Such utopian and eschatological thinking stands in stark tension with Nietzsche's own emphasis on the weight of natural and social history. This apparent tension stems from a failure to take seriously the political implications of Nietzsche's account of the eternal recurrence of the same (ERS). ERS should be interpreted as Nietzsche's attempt to depict, rather than rationally demonstrate, a conception of existence as continual becoming, without progression or eschatological fulfillment, that celebrates the finite and transient rather than the transcendent and eternal. This doctrine not only unifies Nietzsche's revisionary depiction of the past and future, but implies that responsibility can never be fully discharged, but remains an eternally present charge for human beings.

ERS first appears in *The Gay Science* as a demon's provocation, offered without demonstration or proof: "this life as you live it and have lived it you will live it once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it" (*GS*: 341). While provocative, this singular passage offers little by way of explanation or implication. Instead, it is important to follow Nietzsche's own "stage directions" and turn again to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nietzsche both identifies "the fundamental conception of this work" as "the idea of the eternal recurrence" (*EH*: "Zarathustra," 1), and introduces the character of Zarathustra in the subsequent passage of *The Gay Science* (342).[70]

Turning to *Zarathustra* reveals a far more complex conception of ERS. Throughout the narrative, Zarathustra actively combats the doctrine of the literal repetition of all that is. He first encounters this doctrine in the figure of the Soothsayer who preaches that "everything is empty,

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[70] On this move, see: Loeb, *Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, 32-33.

everything is the same, everything was" (*TSZ*: "Soothsayer"). Here ERS is figured as a form of Schopenhaurian pessimism, which views life as an infinite and eternal burden; it is Zarathustra's task to reinterpret this abysmal thought from one of despair into a life-affirming and creative will.[71]

Similarly, in his prophetic battle with the dwarf, the "spirit of gravity," his "devil and arch-enemy" (*TSZ*: "Vision and Riddle," 1), he raises the idea of ERS in the gateway of the Moment [*Augenblick*]. Here, "Two paths come together here; no one has yet walked them to the end. This long lane back: it lasts an eternity. And that long lane outward – that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they blatantly offend each other" (*TSZ*: "Vision and Riddle," 2). Zarathustra challenges the dwarf with the tension between linear time with a clear beginning and end and the phenomenological experience of time's flow. Rejecting teleological narratives, Zarathustra forces us to contend with the challenging, if not incomprehensible, thought of time extending infinitely backwards and forwards.

However, the dwarf refuses to dwell in such tension, instead seeking solace in a hidden order behind appearance. He invokes cosmic cycles of time to avoid Zarathustra's challenge: "'all that is straight lies,' murmured the dwarf contemptuously. 'All truth is crooked, time itself is a circle.'" But Zarathustra instead responds with his own vision of the world:

> Must not whatever *can* already have passed this way before? Must not whatever *can* happen, already have happened, been done, passed by before? And if everything has already been here before, what do you think of this moment, dwarf? Must this gateway too not already – have been here? And are not all things firmly knotted together in such a way that this moment draws after it *all* things to come? Therefore – itself as well? For whatever *can* run, even in this long lane *outward* – *must* run it once more (*TSZ*: "Vision and Riddle," 2)!

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[71] Gooding-Williams argues that ERS transforms in Zarathustra's speeches mirroring the spirit's three metamorphoses. This Soothsayer's doctrine of recurrence is that of the camel, who bears existence as a heavy weight. Throughout the text, Zarathustra and his doctrine transform first into the Lion who rejects this doctrine, and finally into the child's innocence. In this final position, "Zarathustra bases his judgment that he is tied to a recurrence of the same on his dove-inspired belief that bodily passion and the possibility of experiencing passional chaos have been returned to European modernity, thereby enabling him and the men he persevered in anticipating to play the child's game of creation." *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism*, 296.

For Zarathustra, ERS is a challenge to see oneself, as one is, as bound up in eternal cycles of becoming, a knot of causes that connects all things in time and space and from which there is no escape. Inextricably interwoven together, nothing truly passes away, but recurs perpetually; what is to come is simply another configuration and interpretation of the same finite processes which have always existed.

Zarathustra encounters this interpretation of ERS a final time, as uttered by his animal companion. After collapsing under the nauseating thought that even the "small human beings recur eternally," his animals try to comfort him with an interpretation of ERS as Zarathustra's commission to "return to this same and selfsame life […] too once again teach the eternal recurrence of all things." But Zarathustra rejects this "hurdy-gurdy song" of his companions, calling them "foolish rascals and barrel organs" (*TSZ*: "Convalescent," 2). [72] Instead he speaks silently with his own soul, telling himself that I gave you back your freedom over what is created and uncreated: and who knows as you know the lust of future things?" The thought of ERS leaves his soul "super-rich and heavy," pregnant with future possibilities, challenging the fatalistic reading (*TSZ*: "Great Longing"). Zarathustra then sings a song with life, who warns him of the "old heavy, heavy growling bell" signaling that "you [Zarathustra] will soon leave me." In reply, Zarathustra tells her hesitantly, "'But you also know –' and I said something in her ear," to which life replies: "You *know* that, oh Zarathustra? No one knows that" (*TSZ*: "Other Dance Song," 2). Once again, the power of ERS is not in some objective cosmological representation, but in how it binds Zarathustra to life in an empowered, affirmative way, allowing him to overcome the melancholic despair at living in a world without transcendent or eschatological escape. [73]

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[72] Lampert is helpful here in distinguishing between the animals' interpretation and Zarathustra's: *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 222-223.

[73] Lampert discusses the almost mystical experience that leads Zarathustra to the truth of ERS. *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 167.

The image of ERS that emerges from Zarathustra thus stands in stark contrast to the picture

of cosmic cycles that interpreters have found by turning to Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks.[74]

Attempts to reconstruct ERS as a cosmological theory largely failed to overcome Georg Simmel's

1907 refutation of these proofs, however.[75] Cosmological interpretations also run in stark contrast

to Nietzsche's own warnings against "objectifying" the world "like the natural scientists do" (*BGE*:

21). Instead, attention to *Zarathustra* reveals that ERS is an attempt to aesthetically represent a world

in which the only thing that is infinite is finitude. Rather than identical and sequential repetition, the

sameness that eternally recurs is the very web of interrelated transient processes, what Nietzsche

calls the "will-to-power," that constitute existence. Or, as Joshua Foa Dienstag describes it,

Nietzsche "is not saying that we must relieve the past again and again; rather, this pattern of

destruction and creation is unalterable and must be borne."[76] Additionally, in contrast to Heidegger's

reading, who interprets the 'eternal' in ERS as a "form of ill will *against* sheer transiency and thereby

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[74] Both Arthur Danto and Martin Heidegger argue that the only "proof" of this doctrine are to be found in his notebooks. See: Martin Heidegger, "The Eternal Recurrence of the Same," in *Nietzsche Volume Ii: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HaperCollins Publishers, [1961] 1984), 70; Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Expanded edition ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, [1964] 2005), 186. Nietzsche's "proofs" of ERS, found in his notebooks, are premised on an infinite amount of time, but a finite amount of physical force, because "the world, as force, may not be thought of as unlimited, for it *cannot* be so thought of" (*WP*: 1062). Given this finitude, "the world also lacks the capacity for eternal novelty" (*WP*: 1062), and instead "every possible combination would at some time or another be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times" (*WP*: 1066). While Nietzsche's interest in natural science is well documented, there is reason, as has been shown, to be skeptical of the position that ERS was intended as an objective depiction of nature in itself. For a study of Nietzsche's readings in natural science that influenced ERS, see Robin Small, *Nietzsche in Context* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001).

[75] Simmel argues that (1) Nietzsche's notebook proofs establish only the constant recombination of existing elements but not the strict repetition of the exact same sequence and (2) even if identical recurrence was established that there would be no practical value of the doctrine since the ego would not subsist across time is largely accepted as definitive. Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, trans. Helmut Loiskandl, Deena Weinstein, and Michael Weinstein (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, [1907] 1986), 172-74. Soll expands upon these points, suggesting that even if Nietzsche were able to establish the truth of ERS, it would generate indifference, not the joy or despair that Nietzsche believes it entails. Ivan Soll, "Reflections on Recurrence: A Re-Examination of Nietzsche's Doctrine, *Die Ewige Wiederkehr Des Gleichen*," in *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert C. Solomon (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1973). Loeb offers a defense of ERS against Simmel in: *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, Chapter 1 and Paul S. Loeb, "Eternal Recurrence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[76] Joshua Foa Dienstag, "Nietzsche's Dionysian Pessimism," *The American Political Science Review* 95, no. 4 (2001): 934.

a highly spiritualized spirit of revenge,"[77] ERS asserts becoming, multiplicity, and difference disclose the nature of reality, and that appeals to transcendence or universality are doomed to failure. ERS forces individuals to confront both their mutual dependency with all that is and the truth that there is nothing beyond or outside of these interrelations to which one could appeal.

This reading should also be distinguished from a series of deflationary readings which transform ERS from a metaphysical thesis into a practical maxim or new categorical imperative.[78] Such readings, however, fail to show why the thought of ERS, which makes ontological claims, is necessary at all if it is not to be taken seriously.[79] While ERS does seek to imbue a practical reorientation, these implications are only possible by taking seriously ERS's ontological claims. That is, Nietzsche believes that ERS discloses a truth about the world, if not in literal term, but as the only way that a world consisting of will-to-power – without purpose, beginning, or end, and without transcendent evaluative criteria – can be made sensible to human beings. It eternalizes difference, rather than sameness, compelling humanity to "acknowledge and celebrate an open world full of variety, diversity, and individuality."[80] It is only through this depiction, this revaluation of nature,

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[77] Martin Heidegger, "Who Is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?," in *Nietzsche Volume Ii: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, [1954] 1984), 288.

[78] These strategies were evident in the earliest English commentaries by Danto and Kauffmann. See: Danto, *Nietzsche*, 185 and Kauffman, *Nietzsche*, 277-286. Later scholarship has developed a series of readings that attempt to show how the doctrine has important psychological impacts – namely life affirmation – regardless of its metaphysical truth. Bernd Magnus views it as a counter-mythology to Platonism and Christianity that aims at creating an existential imperative for one's actions. Bernd Magnus, "Nietzsche's Eternalistic Counter-Myth," *The Review of Metaphysics* 26, no. 4 (1973).. Nehamas provides the now canonical account of ERS as a way of orienting one's self in such a way that one can affirm it's eternal recurrence. Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), Chapter 5. Maudemarie Clark suggests that the ERS must be read in an "uncritical or preanalytic manner" in order to generate its affirmative effects. Clark, Chapter8. Bernard Reginster argues that ERS provides a substantive revaluation of values that foregrounds becoming and transience as that which is to be affirmed against nihilism. Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), Chapter 5.

[79] See: Aaron Ridley, "Nietzsche's Greatest Weight," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 14 (1997); Bernard Williams, "Introduction," in *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xvi.

[80] Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, 391. See also Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 48 and Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism*, 296.

that humanity can come to affirm its place in an eternally restless cosmos of becoming by tending to its embodied, quotidian, and transient nature.

The temporal perspective of ERS offers a stark challenge to the conceits of moral responsibility. By rejecting any teleological end to temporal processes, it rejects moral responsibility's regulative ideal of a final judgment, an ultimate settling of all moral debts. As he writes in a notebook entry, "everything becomes and recurs eternally — escape is impossible" (*WP*: 1058)! There can be no final adjudication of responsibility or final accounting in the last instance. Ascribing and taking responsibility is, and always will be, a politically fragile act taken in time rather than against a transcendent moral backdrop. Similarly, ERS challenges the isolation of distinct causal moments arranged in a linear sequence. As such, the causal tracing underpinning personal responsibility becomes revealed as a particular political interpretation of the world rather than a necessary metaphysical truth. Any judgment towards one is an ascription of responsibility towards all of existence, given the inextricable knotting of all existence. Hence Zarathustra describes the fundamental innocence of the world: "For all things are baptized at the well of eternity beyond good and evil" (*TSZ*: "Before Sunrise;" see also: "Metamorphoses").

The ERS, therefore, adds even greater nuance to anticipatory responsibility's temporality. Taking responsibility for the future cannot ignore the past, because the future is nothing other than the outgrowth of ongoing temporal processes. These processes do not make the future fated or inevitable, as they always contain within them an abundance of possibilities. Anticipatory responsibility is taken in time: an intervention into the present flow of historical processes to shape their emergence into the future. It is to take responsibility for the ongoing movement of social and political forces, and ensure that they make possible human flourishing. By insisting both that the future is inextricably bound to the past and that no escape from the flows is possible, ERS furthermore orients responsibility as an ongoing endeavor extending forward in time without

completion or termination. One anticipates the future not by hoping for messianic intervention, but by enacting and embodying that future in the present.

Thus, in contrast to Arendt's reading, ERS grounds rather than abdicates responsibility.[81] Nietzsche explicitly rejects that ERS is blind affirmation of everything; instead it requires "freedom from morality […] the enjoyment of all kinds of uncertainty, experimentalism, as a counterweight to this extreme fatalism; abolition of the concept of necessity" (*WP*: 1060). Similarly, throughout the narrative of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche rejects pure acquiescence, most explicitly stating that "there is nothing more false in the world, nor malicious" than the doctrine "'Just let the world be the world! Do not lift so much as a finger against it'" (*TSZ*: "Old and New Tablets," 15)![82] In its denial of any escape from the flow of becoming or final resolution of moral judgments, Nietzsche's doctrine of ERS places responsibility for maintaining and caring for the world squarely on actually existing human beings. In claiming responsibility through ERS, transforming the "grisly accident[s]" of time through the creative "I shall will it thus" (*TSZ*: "Redemption"), we no longer displace our responsibility to the world by ascribing guilt, but freely bear it.

Because, as Simmel states, "we know that no moment of our life is ever over once and for all," Nietzsche reorients responsibility from something that could be ultimately and finally settled

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[81] Arendt reads ERS as an "unqualified yes to life, that is, on an elevation of Life as experienced outside all mental activities to the rank of supreme value by which everything else is to be evaluated." Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, One-Volume Edition ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), II.163. She finds in both Nietzsche's doctrines of ERS and the will-to-power a rejection of willing leaving nothing "but the 'wish to be a Yes-sayer,' to bless everything there is for being, 'to bless and say Amen'" (172).

[82] Furthermore, in the Third Part, Zarathustra insists: "indeed, nor do I like those of whom each thing is good and this world seems the very best. Such types I call the all-complacent. All complacency that knows how to taste everything – that is not the best taste! I honor the obstinate, choosy tongues and stomachs, which have learned to say 'I' and 'yes' and 'No.' But chewing and digesting everything – that is truly the swine's style! To always say hee-yaw – only the ass learned that, and whoever is of its spirit!" (*TSZ*: "Spirit of Gravity," 2). The Fourth Part, though only distributed privately, contains corrections of several misinterpretations, including this one. The group of "higher men" – all representing different misinterpretations and misappropriations of Zarathustra's teachings – worshipped the ass as a new god, singing of litany that parodies Zarathustra's affirmation of life and eternity with a blanket affirmation of the world to which the ass "brayed Hee-yaw" (*TSZ*: "Awakening, 2). Zarathustra chastises the men for simply reverting back to Christian piety, embracing the little children promised to inherit the kingdom of heaven rather than Zarathustra's children to whom is promised the meaning of the earth (*TSZ*: "Ass-Festival, 2).

without remainder to a continual demand to respond.[83] In seducing us to take seriously our

unfathomable and perpetual links to the totality of nature, in all of its finite and temporal qualities,

we become, in Del Caro's words, "responsible for and to ourselves, our fellow human beings, fellow

animals, and all life forms on earth, but not responsible in the sense of guilt, bad conscience."[84]

Similarly, no ascription of responsibility or guilt can absolve us of the past's specters. The past, as

much as the future, requires taking responsibility: affirming, acknowledging, and giving an account

to the eternally present past rather than consigning it to the mist of history.

Rather than condemning the future to be the ceaseless repetition of the past, ERS promises

a liberation from moral guilt with a corresponding responsibility to actively and creatively care for

the only world that exists. With no escape from the world, no final judgement, and no

transcendental moral standards, Nietzsche places responsibility for what humanity and the earth will

become squarely on our shoulders. In the next section, I show how this temporal revaluation of

responsibility entails that the object of responsibility moves from the individual to the world itself.

VI- "Remain Faithful to the Earth:" From Personal to Worldly Responsibility

Though a strong challenge to moralistic interpretations of personal responsibility, this

temporal reorientation of responsibility still appears in many ways to be highly individualistic.

Nietzsche himself describes himself and his new nobility in *Beyond Good and Evil* as "never thinking

about debasing our duties into duties for everyone, not wanting to relinquish, not wanting to share

your own responsibility" (*BGE*: 272). Zarathustra's frequent retreat from his disciples into solitude –

"Oh solitude! You my home solitude! How blissfully and tenderly your voice speaks to me (*TSZ*:

"Solitude")! – further suggests that this conception of responsibility is one of individual self-

transformation; one takes responsibility for one's own personal relationship to the eternal transience

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[83] Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, 171. See also: Heidegger, "Eternal Recurrence of the Same," 182.
[84] Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, 408.

of time by endowing it with one's own meaning. For many scholars, this individualistic reading

offers a rejoinder to both those who interpret Nietzsche as a proto-fascist or anachronistically as a

political radical.[85]

Such readings oversimplify Nietzsche's revaluation of responsibility, which seeks not only to

challenge dominant conceptions based on guilt, debt, and revenge by shifting temporal orientations,

but also to expand the scope and breadth of our conception of responsibility. If the temporal

revaluation of responsibility, culminating in the Dionysian thought of ERS forecloses the possibility

of making absolute judgements of individual moral responsibility, new questions emerge: To what or

for what are we taking responsibility? How and with what power do we respond? Zarathustra's

answer, developed in tandem with his doctrines of anticipatory responsibility and ERS is that the

world itself, or in his phrasing "the earth," is the proper object of responsibility. In his call to ground

humanity in a new relationship with the world, Nietzsche reveals a constitutive form of

responsibility as the power of responding to the world.[86]

Zarathustra begins his public teaching by imploring the crowd to "remain faithful to the

earth" (*TSZ*: "Prologue, 3). Such terrestrial metaphors recur throughout *Zarathustra*. He tells his

disciples "I love only my *children's land*, the undiscovered land in the furthest sea" (*TSZ*: "Land of

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[85] Nehamas gives the most influential version of this reading, insisting that Nietzsche's project is one of self-cultivation, and he interprets his texts as different literary attempts to create himself. This project implies a sense of responsibility of imposing "a higher order accord among our lower-level thoughts, desires, and actions" and the willingness "to accept responsibility for everything that we have done and to admit what is in any case true: that everything we have done actually constitutes who each one of us is." Nehamas, *Life as Literature*, 188. Leslie Paul Thiel in parallel argues that Nietzsche is giving a political account of the soul as made up of a multiplicity of conflicting drives, which requires the imposition of order. Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[86] The language of constitutive responsibility echoes the arguments of Satkunanandan, who describes the "inexhaustible responsibility constitutive of being human" which takes the "form of an ongoing 'call' to pay attention to our world and our place within it. This constitutive responsibility cannot be specified in advanced, reckoned up, or discharged." *Extraordinary Responsibility*, 6. Satkunanandan herself draws on Nietzsche to theorize this call to responsibility away from what she calls calculable responsibility, or what I have been calling the "moral world-order," but finds Nietzsche's own account of limited use for theorizing this responsibility in a political vein (50). My defense of Nietzsche's thinking for theorizing political responsibility begins in this section and is fully developed in the next chapter, where I also distinguish my own position from Satkunanandan's.

Education"), and decrees to his new nobility to "love your *children's land*; let this love be your new nobility — the undiscovered land in the furthest sea! (*TSZ*: "Old and New Tablets"). While Zarathustra calls upon his disciples to take responsibility for the future of human flourishing, the direct object of this care and concern is the world, the conditions of possibility of existence and flourishing. Zarathustra's project is not to transform himself or his disciples into the overman, but to call humanity to care for the earth in such a way that human flourishing could be made possible. Hence, he implores his disciples, before returning to his solitude at the end of the "First Part," to:

> Remain faithful to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue! Let your bestowing love and your knowledge serve the meaning of the earth! Thus I beg and beseech you. Do not let it fly away from earthly things and beat against eternal walls with its wings! Oh, there has always been so much virtue that flew away! Like me, guide the virtue that has flown away back to earth – yes back to the body and life: so that it may give the earth its meaning, a human meaning (*TSZ*: "Bestowing Virtue, 2").

The proper object of anticipatory responsibility is neither one's past deeds nor is it the unseen future generations beyond the scope of one's care and regard. The world itself is the object of responsibility, giving meaning to both what it has become over time and what it will become in the future.

The interplay between the temporal and spatial language in Nietzsche's thought is crucial. His concern for the future articulates responsibility in broad existential terms: one is responsible for time itself, in ensuring it's continual becoming and evolution rather than restricting it through universal moral standards. Responsibility here is akin to a form of tending, in which the goal is to safeguard an ongoing process and subtly direct it rather than determine its course absolutely and definitively.[87] Taking responsibility for the future of human flourishing is not to direct the passage of time in accordance with a set teleology. Instead, it is to ensure that the possibilities for individuals

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[87] I borrow the idea of tending from Wolin. See: Sheldon S. Wolin, *The Presence of the Past: Essays on the State and the Constitution* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 82-99.

and communities to develop and enhance their capabilities and to provide their own systems of values and meanings amidst the flow of time is always possible. This will require negotiating changing circumstances and contexts, constantly revising and reappraising one's course of action.

As Del Caro helpfully notes, however, focusing exclusively on the temporal elements of ERS and Nietzschean responsibility risks casting Nietzsche's thought in overly abstract and metaphysical terms.[88] Instead, "the element of time in ERS is," he provocatively suggests, "chiefly rhetorical, designed to intensify the motivation for exploring earthly space […] as the property, past, present and future, of a humanity that acknowledges no ownership, now empowerment except to itself."[89] Nietzsche translates the general existential dynamic of responsibility for the ongoing process of time into concrete terms with his use of terrestrial language. This act of grounding serves as a reminder that becoming is always instantiated in particular concrete persons, animals, relationships, social structures, and political institutions. Responsibility thus takes on material terms as care for and solicitude towards the world, conceived of as the sum total of social and natural structures that facilitate and enable human life.[90] If the goal of anticipatory responsibility is to enable human flourishing – the possibility for individuals and communities to develop their powers and craft meaningful individual and collective lives for themselves – then the direct object of responsibility must be tending to the network of natural, social, material, and symbolic relationships which constitute the constantly evolving environment in which humans live, develop, and make meaning. Taking anticipatory responsibility is to tend to these conditions of possibility for human life, to facilitate not only survival but meaningful and flourishing lives.

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[88] Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, 250-252.
[89] Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, 243.
[90] This conception of world will be further developed in explicit political terms in the following chapter, but it draws from Myers' conception of the world, which "involves a vast array of relations, places, practices, material goods, and so on that coexist with one another in complex webs, defying any neat nature/culture divide and exceeding the category of human being. *World* refers to the sum total of conditions of life on earth." *Worldly Ethics*, 100.

Nietzsche describes the world in ecological language, eroding strong distinctions between the subject – humanity – and the object – the world – of anticipatory responsibility.[91] As early as 1870, he had argued for a Dionysian representation of the world of becoming and interconnectivity. In such a world, "the *principium individuationis* is disrupted, subjectivity disappears entirely before the erupting force of the general element in human life, indeed of the general element in nature" (*DW*: 1)[92] Rather than hermetically sealed objects and autonomous agents, Nietzsche's Dionysian world is made up of overflowing forces constantly impinging upon each other and intertwining. In a striking notebook entry from 1885, he describes the world as a "monster of energy without beginning, without end; a firm iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself" (*WP*: 1067)[93]

In this world, human beings and the social structures they construct are not different in kind from all else that exists. Human animals are simply particular animals who have evolved through natural and social pressures into being conscious of themselves and eventually able to take responsibility for themselves. Hence Dienstag's summary that "we are no different from the world to which we are condemned; we are not islands of being in a sea of becoming, but are constantly transforming and developing."[94] Nietzsche's world is made up of continual flux; human beings are not an exception to this fact.

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[91] The political implications of this move will be developed in more detail in both Chapter 4's discussion of the politics of anticipatory responsibility as well as the Conclusion's discussion of global climate change.

[92] Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Dionysiac World View," in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Guess and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1870] 2007). Citations are noted as *DW* in the text and refer to section number. These themes are expanded in *Birth of Tragedy*. For example: "If we add to this horror the blissful ecstasy which arises from the innermost ground of man, indeed of nature itself, whenever this break down of the *principium individuationis* occurs, we catch a glimpse of the essence of the *Dionysiac*, which is best conveyed by the analogy of *intoxication*. These Dionysiac stirrings, which, as they grow in intensity, cause subjectivity to vanish to the point of complete self-forgetting […]" (*BT*: 1).

[93] The passage continues later: "This my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my 'beyond good and evil,' without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself […]" This further suggests the importance of reading ERS as an artistic depiction of the world.

[94] Dienstag, "Dionysian Pessimism," 935

Given this breakdown between traditional divisions between the natural and the social, taking responsibility entails responding to the world not as independent of humanity, but as one that humanity has contributed to shaping throughout its history. The world to which we are compelled to respond cannot be separated from the meanings and interpretations that humans have brought to it. The earth consists of not only the "natural world" but also the entire ecosystems of social, political, and economic practices and institutions that have reordered the world. It is to this intermeshing of forces and structures that Nietzsche locates our responsibility. Nietzsche's call to be faithful to the earth is a reminder that we do not respond to the world from beyond it, but from within historical, political, and ecological contexts and the lived experiences of embodied individuals. As Acampora suggests, this form of responsibility "neither fixates on a notion of causal agency nor retreats to an ethics of self in which responsibility is understood in terms of perfecting oneself. Focus on a scope of powers in the context of thinking about *responsibility* also implies a domain of care, regard, concern, that is mindful of our social and historical nature."[95]

Thus, responding to the world cannot only be one of adjusting one's dispositions to the world's temporal flow to temper resentment, but requires the realist project of negotiating the actually existing structures that constitute the world.[96] As Del Caro suggests, "A grounded approach to envisioning ecumenical goals requires a basis in history and in past and existing models of culture – Nietzsche does not envision a u-topia and it would make a mockery of his earth affirmation if he were to attempt to make of the place per se, namely the earth, some sort of non-place, namely a utopia – Nietzsche's energies are devoted to letting the earth be a place, *the place*, for human

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[95] Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche*, 176.

[96] By realist, I imply an approach that attends to the existing relations of power and political context rather one that begins with abstract moral ideals. On Nietzsche's realism see: Daniel W. Conway, "The Birth of the State," in *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought*, ed. Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 37-45. See also the discussion in Chapter 1, Section II.

habitation."[97] To "give the earth its meaning, a human meaning" (*TSZ*: "Bestowing Virtue," 2) is to revalue our current relationship to the world and create new forms of social and political practices, not out of scratch or with reference to some moral ideal, but by creatively reworking the world as one finds it.

This implies both a more capacious and more modest conception of responsibility than that of personal moral responsibility. It is more capacious in that it expands the scope of one's responsibilities beyond oneself to the world itself and the future flourishing of humanity. In doing so it points to the constitutive capacity to respond to the world, from which particular interpretations of responsibility are drawn. Yet, it is more modest in that it does not seek to fully account for all suffering or provide a final recompense for all debts. One cannot be held morally or personally responsible for the fact that the world is the way it is, but one is still responsible to care for and transform this world towards life-affirming ends.

VII- Beyond Personal Moral Responsibility

The preceding analysis does not recover a "theory of responsibility" in the traditional sense of articulating how and to what extent deeds can be imputed to agents. Nor does it engage in the fool's errand of providing a complete and definitive list of one's responsibilities. Instead, Nietzsche offers a series of interrogations into how different narratives of responsibility offer different modes of responding to the world. Where ascriptions of personal moral responsibility respond to the world with resentment and attempt to domesticate uncertainty and transience through a moral ledger of agents and deeds, Nietzsche shows not only the danger, but the futility of such a project. Such accounting practices isolate people from each other, generating a psychic economy of debt, blame, and sin, that turn individuals inward, towards their own moral debts and away from the world. Yet

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[97] Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, 266.

attempts to translate the flux of interconnected processes that constitute the world into discrete causal moments that link actions to accountable agents are doomed to failure, as the complexity of the such a world always exceeds such interpretations.

Thus, Nietzsche transforms our need to hold each other accountable into an interpretation of responsibility that takes both a broader temporal perspective, extending into the future as well as one extending beyond individual actions to the structure of the world. In line with the interpretation of responsibility as a political construction offered in the first chapter, this project shows us that our conceptions of responsibility are not based on any metaphysical or moral truths about the world, but are instead contingent political responses. In showing how we could interpret the world differently, Nietzsche suggests that our most fundamental responsibility is the responsibility for how we respond to and interpret the world. Our responsibilities, therefore, begin with the values through which we make sense of the world.

Thus, Nietzsche's writings on responsibility are far more generative than is commonly assumed. Not only does his work provide valuable insights into the psychological and political mechanisms underpinning our attachments to personal moral responsibility, but he articulates the beginnings of an alternative interpretation of responsibility. Whereas personal responsibility generates and fuels cycles of resentment culminating in a nihilism that precludes political action and disparages the natural and experiential world, Nietzsche places these as orienting elements of his own account of responsibility. Anticipatory responsibility's primary motivation is to secure the conditions of possible human flourishing, translating dissatisfaction with the world towards creative political projects to transform and away from resentful ascriptions of blame. Rather than a rhetorical weapon used to insulate political structures from critique and intensify moralistic politics, anticipatory responsibility gestures towards a politics of creativity and generosity.

Nietzsche never explicitly articulates the politics of his revaluation of responsibility; Zarathustra himself seems to eschew political action for existential reflection or ethical self-fashioning.[98] Thus the specific politics of anticipatory responsibility remain nebulous. Recalling the third dimension of political analysis outlined in Chapter 1, it is necessary to question what type of politics anticipatory responsibility envisions. To what political projects can anticipatory responsibility be invoked to support and defend? The following chapter takes up this challenge, working to extend and develop Nietzsche's thought in ways that he did not anticipate or foresee. That is, I seek to separate the core idea of anticipatory responsibility from the ways that Nietzsche explicitly develops the idea. In doing so I will show not only the potential ways that Nietzsche's thought can animate an ethic of political responsibility but also how Nietzsche's own personal dismissal of political activity limits the possibilities of achieving his own goals. My goal is to stay true to the animating spirit of Nietzsche's thought while exploring the theoretical illumination it can provide in contexts beyond his own.

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[98] This is not to suggest that Nietzsche himself was completely unconcerned with politics as much scholarship understands his critical project in terms of his own political context. For a compelling study of Nietzsche's life and thought contextualized as a response to Bismarkian politics, see: Peter Bergmann, *Nietzsche, "the Last Antipolitical German"* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987). In this vein, Tamsin Shaw's reads Nietzsche as a "political skeptic." Tamsin Shaw, *Nietzsche's Political Skepticism* (Princeton University Press, 2009). Thomas H. Brobjer argues that Nietzsche views political concerns as counter-productive to the real task of philosophy: the flourishing of oneself and one's culture. Thomas H. Brobjer, "Critical Aspects of Nietzsche's Relation to Politics and Democracy," in *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought*, ed. Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt (New York: Walter de Gruyer, 2008).

Chapter 4:
Politicizing Responsibility

I-The Protean Politics of Nietzschean Responsibility

What type of politics does anticipatory responsibility generate? Engaging this question is

necessary to evaluate it as a contending interpretation with personal moral responsibility. Nietzsche's

frequent disparaging comments about democracy[1] and his use of troubling biological tropes,[2] grant

some legitimacy to critics of Nietzschean responsibility as incompatible with, at least democratic,

politics.[3] As argued in the previous chapter, however, Nietzsche's conception of human flourishing

is premised on a pluralistic commitment to a multiplicity of perspectives and a theory of constant

self-overcoming. Therefore, his insistence that nobility means "never thinking about debasing our

duties into duties for everyone, not wanting to relinquish, not wanting to share your own

responsibility" (*BGE*: 272) should be read as a critique of universal moral standards of responsibility

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[1] He asserts that that "human beings are not equal" (*TSZ*: "Scholars"), that democracy is "an abased (more specifically a diminished) form of humanity" (*BGE*: 203) and that "one should also give it a push" (*TSZ*: "Old and New Tablets," 20), that there is "no poison [that] is more poisonous than" the doctrine of equality (*TI*: "Expeditions," 48), and that "caste-order, *order of rank*, is just a formula for the supreme law of life itself" (*AC*: 57). The concern, one given voice to in Nietzsche's own notebooks, is that the goal of anticipatory responsibility is not flourishing of all humanity, but the flourishing of "the future 'masters of the earth'; – a new, tremendous aristocracy, based on the severest self-legislation, in which the will of philosophical men of power and artist-tyrants will be made to endure for millennia" (*WP*: 960). For many, such statements show the incompatibility of Nietzsche's thought with democratic politics. Emblematic of this position is: Ruth Abbey and Fredrick Appel, "Nietzsche and the Will to Politics," *The Review of Politics* 60, no. 1 (1998).

[2] Particularly concerning is Nietzsche's description of the physician's responsibility, who in "the highest interest of life" may authorize "the most ruthless suppression and sequestration of degenerating life – for example in determining the right to reproduce, the right to be born, the right to live" (*TI*: "Expeditions," 36). Drochon provides a compelling summary of a variety of programs Nietzsche recommends in his late writings and the *Nachlass* which suggest that his "Party of Life" is grounded on a eugenic project. Hugo Halferty Drochon, "The Time Is Coming When We Will Relearn Politics," *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 39 (2010): 75-78.

[3] For example, Wolin characterizes Nietzsche's subordination of politics to culture as a "critical totalitarianism," which "takes the form of a relentless destruction, of emptying the world of established forms of value, religion, morality, politics, and popular culture." Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 464. This politics of destruction not only necessitates elitism for Wolin (479-481), but prefigures twentieth-century totalitarianism in its need for constant disruption, struggle, and movement (493). However, as I have argued in the previous chapter, Nietzsche's conception of revaluation complements his own account of political imagination, suggesting a more nuanced reading of Nietzsche's "destructive project." More specifically, Vázquez-Arroyo contends that Nietzsche's revaluation of responsibility is antithetical to a theory of political responsibility. Instead, "his retrieval of a new responsibility largely consists of a quest for a life-affirming culture and its institutional conditions of possibility, which include an order of rank whose attainment is paved by ennobling suffering, violence, and war." Vázquez-Arroyo, *Political Responsibility*, 126. Not only does this undermine traditional notions of responsibility, but also justifies a war in the name of life, "wars whose initiators and instigators are accountable to no one and only responsible to themselves" (128).

that erode individual differences under a transcendent ideal.[4] The challenge of drawing upon

Nietzsche's thought is not that Nietzsche's revaluation of responsibility is anti-democratic or proto-

fascist, but that it remains too protean to direct explicit political proposals by itself.[5] Or, in the

language of Chapter 1, Nietzsche's vision of the political world remains underdetermined;

anticipatory responsibility's implicit political commitments must be made explicit.

To gain traction on these questions and outline the politics of anticipatory responsibility, I

push the theoretical core of Nietzsche's writings beyond their immediate contexts and Nietzsche's

own explicit intentions. Placing his theoretical insights in a political context and in conversation with

debates over responsibility, I show how anticipatory responsibility both animates a political ethic of

responsibility and requires political action to be discharged. Therefore, this chapter departs from the

previous chapter's exegetical mode, and instead extracts anticipatory responsibility's theoretical core

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[4] Therefore, in contrast to Lampert's suggests "a true aristocracy, the rule of the best, of the philosophers of the future, those rarest individuals capable of bearing responsibility for the human future." Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task*, 262. See also: Robert Eden, *Political Leadership & Nihilism: A Study of Weber and Nietzsche* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1983), Especially, Chapter 4. Instead, I follow Wendy Brown's suggestion: "perhaps Nietzschean critiques and genealogies can cut into politics, productively interrupting, violating, or disturbing political formations rather than being applied to, merged, or identified with them." Wendy Brown, "Nietzsche for Politics," in *Why Nietzsche Still? Reflections on Drama, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 209.

[5] Herman W. Siemens' thorough study of Nietzsche's published and unpublished writings demonstrate that Nietzsche has a far more complicated relationship with democracy than is usually assumed. Finding evidence for four different accounts of the conceptual relationship between democracy and the project of human enhancement – incompatibility, ambivalence, exogenous compatibility, and endogenous compatibility – Siemens rejects as flying "in the face of the textual evidence" any claim to provide a definitive and singular account of Nietzsche's politics. Herman W. Siemens, "Yes, No, Maybe So... Nietzsche's Equivocations on the Relation between Democracy and 'Grosse Politik'," in *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought*, ed. Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 264. To give one provocative example from Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche even suggests that the plurality and "disintegration" of democracy could "affect such a nature as one more stimulus and goad to life" creating "those amazing, incomprehensible, and unthinkable ones, those human riddles destined for victory and for seduction" (BGE: 200). While even Nietzsche's compatibilist accounts still posit an instrumental valuation of democracy, by making possible the conditions for human enhancement, they betray Nietzsche's realist concern with making use of the possibilities available in any given time to facilitate human flourishing, rather than a tyrannical lust. For more on the protean nature of Nietzsche's political thought, see: Tracy B. Strong, "Nietzsche's Political Misappropriation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

and places it in dialogue with contemporary political theory. Such a move is not only justified by

Nietzsche's own understanding of authorship,[6] but draws substance from his own critical project.

As demonstrated in *Twilight of the Idols*, part of Nietzsche's critique of democracy is precisely

its inhibition of the institutions, affects, and dispositions of political responsibility. He writes:

> For there to be institutions, there needs to be a type of will, instinct, imperative that
> is anti-liberal to the point of malice: the will to tradition, to authority, to a
> responsibility that spans the centuries, to *solidarity* in the chain that links generations
> forwards and backwards *ad infinitum* […] The West in its entirety has lost the sort of
> instincts that give rise to institutions, that give rise to a *future*: it might well be that
> nothing rubs its 'modern spirit' the wrong way more than this. People live for today,
> people live very fast, – people live very irresponsibly: and this is precisely what
> people call 'freedom.' The things that *make* an institution into an institution are
> despised, hated, rejected: people think that they are in danger of a new sort of slavery
> when the word 'authority' is so much as spoken out loud. The value instincts of our
> politicians, our political parties, are so decadent that *they instinctively prefer* things that
> disintegrate, that accelerate the end… (*TI*: "Expeditions," 39).

Building and preserving a political world requires, according to Nietzsche a strong political will as

well as the willingness and capability to create an authoritative power that can bind and constrain

individuals into a collective whole lasting into the future. This sense of responsibility supplants the

individual's momentary instincts for self-gratification towards a project of collective empowerment.

Political responsibility replaces individualistic accounting practices with a new set of political goals.

Nietzsche adopts an almost melancholic tone in this passage, eulogizing a political sensibility

no longer possible in modernity.[7] Instead of seeing oneself as bound to a political community,

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[6] In *Ecce Homo*, he explicitly draws such a distinction: "I am one thing, my writings are another matter" (*EH*: "Books,"
1). Furthermore, Zarathustra chastises his disciples for blindly following his teachings. "One repays a teacher badly if
one always remains a pupil only. […] Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me
will I return to you" (*TSZ*: "Bestowing Virtue," 3). This is a theme that occurs in various places throughout Nietzsche's
corpus. In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, he describes the role of "true educators and cultivators" as a "means of finding
oneself, of coming to oneself out of the bewilderment in which one usually wanders as in a dark cloud" (*SE*: 1).
Friedrich Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer as Educator," in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, [1874] 1997). Citations are noted as *SE* in the text and refer to section number. Elsewhere in *Ecce
Homo,* he warns his readers that *Zarathustra* "is not 'preaching;' no *faith* is demanded here" again suggesting the value of
self-reflection and development rather than doctrinal obedience (*EH*: "Preface," 4).
[7] See: Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 73.

responsible for the deeds of its past and to its continuity in the future, liberalism isolates individuals from their connections to the world and the becoming of time. Nietzsche interprets modernity's stark juxtaposition of freedom and authority as an abdication of political responsibility. Zarathustra's own frustrations with the state, political movements, and his disciples point to Nietzsche's own antipathy towards modern politics, and the further suggestion that retreating from politics is the only avenue for a self-responsible individual. However, the wager of this chapter is that the challenges of responsibility in modern politics should lead to the opposite conclusion: rather than a retreat from politics, a renewed political interpretation is now desperately needed. Nietzsche's thought both powerfully diagnoses the dilemma of responsibility, with which this study opened, and opens up new possibilities for political imagination, even if he did not see them fully through.

Finally, and most importantly, this strategy is both consistent and encouraged by the account of anticipatory responsibility explicated in the previous chapter. Taking responsibility for the world requires both a genealogical investigation of the history of the current values and structures that organize the world and a project of revaluation through which existing values, discourses, and forms of life are repurposed and reinterpreted. It cares for the future not by trying to institute a radical break from the past or settle dilemmas definitively, but by taking seriously the world as one finds at and working within the enabling and constraining conditions it provides. In anticipating the future, this theory requires flexibility and revision, as changing political contexts and challenges may require reinterpretation of existing norms, practices, and values. Inspired by this account, I work in this chapter to take an analogous responsibility for Nietzsche's thought. Following the genealogical work of the previous chapter, this chapter seeks to anticipate to what ends and projects his thinking can be put. In this vein, I place Nietzsche's thought in dialogue with twentieth and twenty-first century theorists of political responsibility: Hannah Arendt, Hans Jonas, Max Weber, and Iris M. Young. This dialogue develops the theoretical power of anticipatory responsibility by viewing it through new

perspectives, ideas, and contexts, and generates theoretical tensions, reveals disavowed limitations and blind spots, and poses unforeseen political questions, all of which serve to further explicate and explicate this account of responsibility.

Through this engagement, I advance two main interrelated arguments. First, I argue that politics require an account of responsibility distinct from personal moral responsibility, for which anticipatory responsibility, with its emphasis on both future human flourishing and the structure of the world, is uniquely well suited. Anticipatory responsibility, when moved to questions of power, political, social, and economic structures, and legitimate authority can animate a political ethic of responsibility. Second, the demands of anticipatory responsibility are too great to be borne by an individual; Nietzsche's formulation by itself risks either political impotence or fascistic megalomania. Instead, it requires the use of legitimate coercive force and the building of lasting political institutions, which require the collective action of engaged citizens to be democratically legitimated. Together these arguments entail that taking anticipatory responsibility requires active and engaged democratic citizens collectively mobilizing to build, maintain, and reform the social, economic, and political institutions that structure the world with the goal of making possible the future flourishing of humanity understood as the possibility of human beings, individually and collectively, to realize their capabilities and determine meaningful lives for themselves and their communities.

I develop this argument by outlining four dimensions of a political ethic of responsibility. Sections II and III advance the first prong of the arguing that anticipatory responsibility's temporality (II) and object (III) are well suited for the complex and uncertain dynamics of political life. Section II shows how the temporality of the eternal recurrence of the same provides the expansive vision necessary to animate political action, while Section III develops the conception of world from Chapter III to include taking responsibility for the social, economic, and political structures in which one finds oneself. Sections IV and V further the second prong of the argument,

by discussing the activity (IV) and the subject (V) of political responsibility. Section IV demonstrates that the taking responsibility for the world is only possible through the gaining, maintaining, and use of political power and the generation of authority. Section V subsequently argues that is necessarily to bear anticipatory responsibility as a community to both effectively and legitimately exercise this power. Finally, I conclude by outlining the interrelationships between these dimensions and how they together constitute a political ethic of responsibility.

II-Orienting Responsibility in Time

Nietzsche reorients the temporality of responsibility in response to a pathology he finds endemic to modernity, described in the previously cited passage from *Twilight of the Idols*: "People live for today, people live very fast, – people live very irresponsibly." In contrast to moral responsibility, which isolates individuals in distinct causal moments to ascribe blame or guilt, Nietzsche argues for an expanded temporal horizon: "a responsibility that spans the centuries, to *solidarity* in the chain that links generations forwards and backwards *ad infinitum*" (*TI*: "Expeditions," 39). Anticipatory responsibility cannot be settled by settling past debts, nor does it require disavowing the continued influence of the past. Rather, as discussed in the previous chapter, it is animated by the temporality of the eternal recurrence of the same (ERS), which testifies to the constancy of finite process of becoming and the inability to escape this passage of time. This implies that the deeds, actions, and injustices of the past can never be ultimately resolved through the adjudication of responsibility, but continue to shape and affect the world far beyond their limited intentions. The world, as depicted by ERS, necessarily precedes and outlasts any individual life; one's actions both are constrained and enabled by the after-life of past deeds and outlive one's life as the alterations made in the flow of time continue to reverberate eternally. Inspired by this conception, Nietzsche envisions a capacious interpretation of responsibility as an ongoing sense of care that seeks to preserve the possibility of future human flourishing.

In a similar vein, political thinkers have argued that the vicissitudes of contemporary life require revision of responsibility's temporal assumptions. As Hans Jonas argues, the changing nature of human action, aided by the enhancement of modern technology have rendered existing theories of responsibility inadequate. While traditionally, "no one was held responsible for the unintended later effects of his well-intentioned, well, considered, and well-performed act," there now exists "a growing realm of collective action where doer, deed, and effect are no longer the same as they were in the proximate sphere, and which by the enormity of its powers forces upon ethics a new dimension of responsibility never dreamed of before."[8] Whereas moral responsibility relied on the ability to trace the effects of an action back to an accountable agent, actions now have multiple unforeseen and unpredictable effects, far outlasting the initial occasion of the activity. Specifically, Jonas contends that advances in technology, including the troubling possibility of modifying the natural environment and human genetics, have exponentially increased the unforeseen and uncertain character of action (21). Thus, for Jonas, "it is the aggregate, not the individual doer or deed that matters here; and the indefinite future, rather than the contemporary context of the action, constitutes the relevant horizon of responsibility" (9).[9] Individual actions, while seemingly small and disconnected, are increasingly brought together in complex systems by technological advancements. This exponentially increases both the range and magnitude of individual and communal action in previously unanticipated ways. Like Nietzsche, Jonas expands the scope of responsibility beyond the effects of individual actions, or the aggregate of such actions, to the long-term, and potentially unpredictable, consequences of action.

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[8] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, trans. Hans Jonas and David Herr (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 6..

[9] For Jonas, the enhanced powers of humanity have created a "slow, long-term, cumulative" threat to human existence through the "peaceful and constructive use of worldwide technological power" (ix).

Hannah Arendt, Jonas's lifelong friend and frequent interlocutor, also responds to the responsibility's temporal predicament; however, she locates this predicament in the temporal structure of politics itself. While technological power may exacerbate problems of uncertainty, complexity, and unintended consequences, they lie in the very nature of action itself and are endemic to the domain of politics. According to Arendt, "the strength of the action process is never exhausted in a single deed but, on the contrary, can grow while its consequences multiply […] The reason why we are never able to foretell with certainty the outcome and end of any action is simply that action has no end. The process of a single deed can quite literally endure throughout time until mankind itself has come to an end."[10] Thus politics, which necessarily involves collectives of individuals acting and making claims as to how the world should be structured, is beset by a different temporal logic than morality or the law. Because politics "deals with the coexistence and association of *different* men,"[11] political action is undertaken by individuals in relationship to others rather than as isolated moral or legal subjects. Thus, any individual action, "always reaches out ever further, setting much more into interconnected motion than the man who initiates action ever could have foreseen."[12] The standards of moral responsibility, therefore, are necessarily burdensome and inappropriate to the ever expanding and uncertain temporality of politics, where one "who acts never quite knows what he is doing, that he always becomes 'guilty' of consequences he never intended or even foresaw."[13]

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[10] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 233. Arendt locates the danger of technology not in the uncertainty it creates, but that it creates the possibility of annihilating the world itself. See: "Introduction *into* Politics," 157-161 and *The Human Condition*, 238.

[11] Hannah Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," in *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 93.

[12] *Ibid.*,187.

[13] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 233.

Despite these differences, both Arendt and Jonas supplement Nietzsche's argument for reorienting responsibility's temporality. For Arendt, political responsibility must be distinguished from moral responsibility:

> No moral, individual and personal, standards of conduct will ever be able to excuse us from collective responsibility. This vicarious responsibility for things we have not done, this taking upon ourselves the consequences for things we are entirely innocent of, is the price we pay for the fact that we live our lives not by ourselves but among our fellow men, and that the faculty of action, which, after all, is the political faculty par excellence, can be actualized only in one of the many and manifold forms of human community.[14]

Being bound up in a world that existed before us and will outlast us renders obsolete standards of moral responsibility, which isolate the individual both in time and from others. Max Weber similarly expresses the distinctiveness of responsibility in the political realm, in his famous discussion of the vocation of politics: "Instead of focusing on those issues that concern the politician, namely, the future, and our responsibility for the future," a moralistic interpretation of responsibility, such as those surveyed in Chapter 2, "becomes immersed in questions of past guilt, which are politically sterile because they can never be resolved."[15] For all these thinkers, the dynamics of political life, in which action is always constrained by social structures and has unforeseen consequences, make settling moral debts both a fool's errand and an inappropriate conception of responsibility. Jonas, thus, suggests an alternative formulation: "*One* responsibility of the art of politics is to see to it that the art of politics remains possible in the future […] The general principle here is that any total responsibility, with all its particular tasks and in all its single actions, is always responsible also for preserving beyond its own termination, the *possibility* of responsible action in the future — that is,

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[14] Hannah Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Shocken Books, 2003), 157-58.

[15] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *The Vocation Lectures*, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, [1919] 2004), 80.

for preserving its own preconditions."[16] Political action is necessarily futural, requiring an account of

political responsibility oriented towards the future.

In this vein, Jonas describes a distinct imperative of responsibility appropriate to the

contemporary condition: "The first rule is, therefore, that no condition of future descendants of

humankind should be permitted to arise which contradicts the reason why the existence of mankind

is mandatory at all. The imperative that there be a mankind is the first one, as far as man alone is

concerned."[17] Like Nietzsche, Jonas calls for a temporal reorientation of responsibility. "Above all,"

he writes, "it is the *future* with which responsibility for a life, be it individual or communal, is

concerned beyond its immediate present" (106). To both describe and animate this sense of

responsibility, Jonas similarly invokes imagery of children as complementary to that of the

statesman.[18] For both, the image of the child implies a sense of solicitude amidst uncertainty. As

Jonas writes, "With every newborn child humanity begins anew, and in that sense also the

responsibility for the continuation of mankind is involved" (134). The image of pregnancy also

connects the future to one's experience of the present; the future emerges from and is made possible

by present actions and behavior, rather than emerging *ex nihilo*. While he finds the image of a

parent's responsibility over their children analogous to the statesman's responsibility for the political

community, Jonas pushes this further, challenging parental responsibility's fixed horizon. Because

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[16] Jonas, *Imperative of Responsibility*, 117.

[17] He delineates three characteristics of responsibility: totality, continuity, and futurity. *Ibid.*, 43. Jonas derives this categorical principle from the immanent purposiveness of nature, which posits values by positing ends (78-79). As a purposeful whole, nature also posits a priority of existence: "In every purpose, being declares itself for itself and against nothingness" (81). This ontological priority of existence is the source of ethical imperative for humanity, because human beings, as "the supreme outcome of nature's purposive labor," have the power to affirm or destroy being (82). That is, our own purposiveness, testifies to that of nature, which obligates us to preserve existence. Or, as Jonas later recapitulates: "Man's distinction that he alone can *have* responsibility means also that he *must* have it for others of his like – that is, for such that are themselves potential bearers of responsibility" (99).

[18] He identifies three aspects of responsibility implied by this image: totality, continuity, and futurity. By totality, Jonas means that responsibility concerns "the total being" of the object, not some particular aspect (101). Continuity similarly implies the perpetual scope of concern as long as the object exists (105). Finally, futurity entails that responsibility is not just for the current welfare of the object, but for its potential capacity to be responsible in the future (107).

the nature and character of the future of humanity "must fortunately remain open" (133) and the power of human action extends into an indefinite future, Jonas conceives of responsibility as a perpetual orientation towards the preservation of humanity (122). Both Nietzsche's conception of self-overcoming and Jonas's argument for preservation draw attention to the future's emergence out of ongoing historical processes, and the importance of safeguarding these processes. Invoking the image of children further grounds individuals in an ongoing generational chain, both challenging atomistic conceptions of politics and figuring responsibility as an ongoing project rather than a juridical or financial settlement.

Jonas therefore puts into stark political terms the nihilistic decline of responsibility that Nietzsche bemoans.[19] While Nietzsche thinks of his own revision of responsibility in primarily philosophic or aesthetic terms, reading his theory alongside Jonas's demonstrates more clearly the political potential of anticipatory responsibility. The demands of political life require a sense of responsibility for the future that orients political actors away from settling past moral debts towards the actions that must be taken to preserve the political community into the future. In recognition that ascriptions of responsibility are always political decisions and actions, Jonas, with Arendt and Weber, contends that the primary consideration of any political action should be whether or not it endangers the continued existence of that political community, rather than if it adequately settles moral debts. This entails that moral imperatives can be suspended if their compliance would imperial the community as a whole; those guilty of crimes can be absolved if their punishment would cause the dissolution of society.

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[19] Jonas specifically links nihilistic thinking to the destructive technological power: "behind the nihilism of existentialism and its ethic of arbitrary value-setting, just as behind the whole modern subjectivism, stands modern natural science with its premise of a value-free world." *Ibid.*, 236, n.5. For more on the relationship between Jonas's philosophy of nature and ethics of responsibility as responses to the nihilism of modern science and technology see: Strachan Donnelley, "Hans Jonas, the Philosophy of Nature, and the Ethics of Responsibility," *Social Research* 56, no. 3 (1989).

The contrasts between Jonas's and Nietzsche's discussion of responsibility generate even more valuable insights. Jonas frames responsibility in conservative terms; grounded in a teleological conception of nature and a fear of apocalyptic technological power, his imperative responsibility is primarily one of preservation. By contrast, as shown in the preceding chapter, Nietzsche offers an experimental account, with the goal of a vibrant and flourishing humanity able to creatively enhance its own powers and give meaning to its existence. As a political ethic of responsibility, anticipatory responsibility must take seriously both aspects: experimentation without preservation creates irresponsible destruction, but preservation as an end in itself stifles self-realization.

While the Nietzschean perspective offers an inspiring, almost heroic, image of creative claiming of responsibility, Jonas offers the necessary rejoinder on both the high stakes of the question at hand – the future existence and flourishing of humanity – and the dangers of subjecting everything to free play and experimentation.[20] He thus offers a negative principle: any action that violates the imperative to preserve the political community is excluded, but little guidance is given on what actions should be taken or for what ends the political community should exist.[21] This conservative framing stems from Jonas's "heuristics of fear," which highlights human fragility.[22] His conception of responsibility is an explicit reaction to the potentially apocalyptic danger of modern technology; thus responsibility "is necessarily an ethics of preservation and prevention, not of

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[20] Nietzsche, however, is not unaware of these concerns. His own agonism relies on the stability and constancy of the *agon* as a place of contest. Hence the importance of ostracism, as a means of maintain agonistic contest by restraining the excesses of combat and preventing any one individual from gaining dominance (*HC*: 178). See also: Acampora, *Nietzsche's Contest*, 24-25.

[21] Jonas's formulation is akin to the "Precautionary Principle." The classic formulation is found in the Wingspread Statement: "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically." Cited in Stephen M. Gardiner, "A Core Precautionary Principle," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 35.

[22] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 26-7.

progress and perfection" (139)[23] Preservation of the political community is viewed as an end in itself,

with no clear criteria for evaluating political action or political structures after survival is secured.[24]

However, this catastrophism creates considerable limitations for Jonas's argument. In the

first place, this conservative approach is insufficient to prevent the dehumanization that Jonas fears.

The imperative of survival is both too broad and too strict to give pragmatic political guidance. As

Bernstein notes, "there are many ways of preserving the continuation of life – even human life – on

this planet which we would find morally repulsive, even morally irresponsible."[25] Jonas's simplistic

moralistic dichotomy of preservation vs. enhancement is not sufficient to avoid the dehumanizing

atrocities he fears, as either can be invoked as justification. Here, Nietzsche's revaluation of

responsibility, which champions experimentation and creativity as the proper responses to

uncertainty, shifts the affective register of responsibility. In place of Jonas's apocalyptic fear,

Nietzsche frames the uncertainty of the future as a challenge to be overcome; where Jonas calls for

responsible restraints on human ambition and action, Nietzsche calls for an inspired and active

mode of responsibility.

Zarathustra's "Fourth Part," exemplifies this dynamic. Zarathustra tells the "Higher Men:"

"Those who care most today ask: 'How are human beings to be preserved?' But Zarathustra is the

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[23] See also: 191. In this vein, Jonas also rejects Nietzsche's account of the overman, as either nostalgia for the past or a complete abstraction lacking any account of "what can be done concretely to bring about the higher man" (158).

[24] Thus, Jonas retains moralistic and absolutist framings in his discussion of morality. In his discussion of the archetype of parental responsibility, Jonas indicates that "an element of impersonal guilt is inherent in the causing of existence (the most radical of all causalities of a subject) and permeates all personal responsibility toward the unconsulted object. The guilt is shared by all, because the act of the progenitors was generic and not thought up by them." *Ibid.*, 135. This same image is also lauded as an example of selflessness (39)

[25] Richard J. Bernstein, "Rethinking Responsibility," *Social Research* 61, no. 1 (1994): 848. Neil A. Manson makes a similar argument about the limitations of catastrophic interpretations of the precautionary principle. For Manson, the principle becomes akin to Pascal's Wager and the prohibition of any risk taking can be used to any number of potentially contradictory ends: "The catastrophe principle only requires the mere possibility of catastrophe, and since mere possibilities are so easy to construct, any application of the catastrophe principle will confront a fatal problem: the reasoning it employs can be used to generate a demand for a contradictory course of action. In other words, as it stands, the catastrophe principle is useless as a guide to action." Neil A. Manson, "Formulating the Precautionary Principle," *Environmental Ethics* 24, no. 3 (2002): 273.

only one and the first one to ask: 'How shall human being be overcome'" (*TSZ*: "Higher Men," 3)?

Nietzsche's concern is that humanity will become too content and risk-averse to create anything

meaningful or fulfilling. Jonas's catastrophic prohibitions on action mirror Zarathustra's warning:

"Beware! The time approaches when human beings no longer launch the arrow of their longing

beyond the human, and the string of their bow will have forgotten to whir" (*TSZ*: "Prologue," 5).

Without a broader purpose or goal to animate human action, and combined with the overbearing

fear of extinction, Jonas's emphasis on preservation alone remains limited in its ability to inspire and

motivate political action.[26]

Therefore, motivated by humanity's need to constantly create and reinvent itself, a

Nietzschean conception of human flourishing provides a goal towards which responsibility can be

oriented. Anticipatory responsibility does not simply aim to indefinitely preserve humanity in its

current state, but to make possible the development of individual and community powers and

capabilities so as to live meaningful lives. This involves an element of sustainability, but focuses on

preserving the material, institutional, and cultural conditions to enable such cultivation. Anticipatory

responsibility must balance both preservation and experimentation: either extreme would result in an

irresponsible politics that constrains human flourishing.

For example, in contrast to the late twentieth-century trends in welfare policy discussed in

Chapter 2, anticipatory responsibility rejects both moralistic rhetoric concerning the "deserving" or

"undeserving poor" as well as programs that focus only on providing sufficient means for

subsistence and bare survival. The temporal orientation of anticipatory responsibility shifts the focus

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[26] Bonnie Honig's criticism of "mortalist humanism," with its emphasis on the universality of vulnerability and grief makes a similar argument. She contends that, "we may all be mortals […] but we are also, as Arendt insists along with Nietzsche, natals as well." Additionally, "a natal's pleasure-based counter to grief […] supplements solidarity forged in sorrow and points in the direction of generative action rather than ruminative reflection or ethical orientation." Honig, "Antigone's Two Laws," 9.

from either moralistic or paternalistic responses. Instead it emphasizes actions that create and maintain the space for those in poverty to develop their capacities and determine their own life projects. In addition to providing economic support to alleviate immediate financial needs, anticipatory responsibility may entail longer-term housing and food assistance, additional education and job training, and more fundamental reforms to existing financial and employment practices. In contrast to Clinton-era frame of a temporary safety net and liberal frames of redressing bad luck, anticipatory responsibility aims to secure the material and social conditions of ongoing on human flourishing.

Additionally, Nietzsche's account of temporality challenges any attempt to completely disavow the past. Instead, inspired by the temporality of ERS, it requires grappling with the continued presence of the past extending into the future. Politically, this means that decisions, actions, structures, norms, and values from the past continue to provide enabling and constraining conditions on future action, or as Arendt puts it, the world "transcends our lifespan into the past and future alike; it was there before we came and will outlast our brief sojourn in it."[27] To act politically and take responsibility is to negotiate these pre-existing political networks, rather than consigning the past as resolved or settled. Anticipatory responsibility can only be taken in time, rather than by adopting an extra-temporal perspective. With ERS, this offers both the realist rejoinder that politics cannot escape history, while emphasizing the possibility of creative action and meaning-making within these constraints.

When Nietzsche's account of ERS is read alongside Arendt's distinction between guilt and responsibility, both the uniqueness and challenges of anticipatory responsibility as a political ethic become clearer. "Guilt," Arendt distinguishes, "unlike responsibility, always singles out; it is strictly

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[27] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 55.

personal. It refers to an act, not to intentions or potentialities."[28] While individuals cannot be held morally responsible for the structure of the world within which they find themselves, anticipatory responsibility suggests that, precisely because these extend into and shape the future, one can be politically responsible for them. In many cases, this will require adjudicating questions of legal liability and moral guilt, but such ascriptions will rarely if ever be exhaustive of a political ethic of responsibility. That is, even though any single individual cannot be said to have solely caused, and thus be held accountable, for political predicaments such as global economic inequality, structural discrimination, or global environmental degradation, anticipatory responsibility demands that individuals and communities to act *as if* they were responsible for them. Each of these predicaments issues a call to respond politically, crystallizing Nietzsche's existential call in ERS. Furthermore, while the enormous challenge of taking responsibility for the world indefinitely into the future may lead to either despair or calls for revolutionary transformation, the temporality of ERS suggests another response. The tenacity of the past –solidified in dominant values, structures, and practices – means that responsible action will be necessarily incremental and ameliorative. Taking responsibility means critically engaging the world as it is and working to critique, reform, and produce political institutions and practices rather than abdicating responsibility through either pessimistic despair or messianic hope. One anticipates a future of human flourishing through uncertain and often unsatisfying work in the present, identifying and realizing possibilities for structural change within the world as it exists.

III-Grounding Responsibility in the World

In addition to its temporal extension, that political life is mediated by groups of individuals, political and economic institutions, and relations of power creates a further disconnect between

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[28] Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," 147.

intentions and outcomes. As Weber writes, "It is entirely true and a fundamental fact of all history

[…] that the ultimate product of political activity frequently, indeed, as a matter of course, fails

utterly to do justice to its original purpose and may even be a travesty of it."[29] Moral standards are

therefore inappropriate to the complex and mediated nature of political action, not simply because

of the enhanced temporal dimensions of political life, which endow individual action and behavior

with both a contextual pre-history and an enduring after-life. Of additional importance are what

could be called the spatial dimensions of political life: the institutional and structural environment of

political life, which are not neutral or passive background conditions, but themselves produce

political outcomes.

Nietzsche's terrestrial metaphors, and his call for human beings to "remain faithful to the

earth" (*TSZ*: "Prologue," 3), point to the spatial dimensions of political life, which Arendt

thematizes as "world." The world is the space within which human beings act and is meaningful

because it is not an empty space, but is structured in particular ways that enable and constrain

particular forms of behavior and action. For Arendt,

> this is so because wherever human beings come together – be it in private or socially,
> be it in public or politically – a space is generated that simultaneously gathers them
> into it and separates them from one another. Every such space has its own structure
> that changes over time and reveals itself in a private context as custom, in a social
> context as convention, and in a public context as laws, constitutions, statutes, and
> the like.[30]

Arendt understands the world as the space of appearance for plural individuals, which is distinct to

humans. "The human artifice of the world separates human existence from all mere animal

environment, but life itself is outside this artificial world, and through life man remains related to all

other living organisms."[31] Crucially it constitutes the "space between" individuals, allowing them to

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[29] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 78.
[30] Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," 106.
[31] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2.

not only appear in public, but to appear as distinct individuals, through speech and action.[32] It is

therefore a space of plurality, equality, and freedom: individuals in their distinctiveness gain an

artificial, civic equality and act, freed from the necessity of biological or material needs. Yet while

this structure establishes a sense of stability, she insists, in a Nietzschean vein, that the structure of

the world "changes over time" and reveals itself in different forms. While Arendt insists on the

importance of the constancy that the world's artificial foundations provide amongst the flux of the

natural world, it is also important to bear in mind that the world itself is not static, but subject to its

own flow of becoming, even in Arendt's account.

Drawing on this conception of world, Arendt insists that "at the center of politics lies

concern for the world, not for man." [33] This is not an arbitrary argument by definition, but reflects

the idea that politics is irreducible to either morality or law. The object of responsibility cannot be

limited to individual action, because one's actions are never truly one's own, but are both made

possible and transformed by the social structures within which one finds oneself. As Young writes,

people contribute to structural injustices "indirectly, collectively, and cumulatively through the

production of structural constraints on the actions of many and privileged opportunities for some."[34]

Therefore, Nietzsche's dictum, that "there is no 'being' behind the deed, its effect and what becomes

of it; 'the doer' is invented as an afterthought" (*GM*: I.13) is a particularly apt description of the

political realm.[35] Taking responsibility for human flourishing requires responding to structural

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[32] Arendt describes politics as that which "arises in what lies *between men* and is established as relationships." "Introduction *into* Politics," 95. Later in the same essay, she makes a similar point: "strictly speaking, politics is not so much about human beings as it is about the world that comes into being between them and endures beyond them" (175).

[33] Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," 106. Similarly, Arendt writes that moral standards of individual conduct are irresponsible from a political standard; "its standard is the self and not the world, neither its improvement nor change." "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," 79.

[34] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 96.

[35] This seems in stark contrast to Arendt's conception of politics, which is oriented precisely around revealing one's "who" through speech and action. However, it is important to remember that Arendt does not believe that anyone is ever fully in charge of their own disclosure. For Arendt, the disclosure of the who "can almost never be achieved by a willful purpose […] it is more than likely that the 'who,' which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains

injustices which systematically preclude communities and groups from living flourishing lives.

Understanding the world as the collected conditions of possibility for human life, action, and

flourishing, it provides an immanent object of responsibility. Rather than accounting for oneself

against a transcendent moral law or a private code of conduct, anticipatory responsibility's criteria

are grounded in the world itself: it is the world, and the dilemmas of power it produces, that demand

response. Thus, Garrath Williams helpfully describes Arendtian responsibility, using language

similar to Haraway's invoked in Chapter 3's discussion, as "an on-going responsiveness to the world,

including a need to respond for what has been done."[36] Just as political responsibility requires a

broadened temporal perspective, it also requires a shift in object from individual action to the world,

both for its continuity into the future and for the manner in which it is structured.

Young builds on this conception of the world by emphasizing the important role that the

structure of the world plays. She shows how "social structural processes" are not neutral

background conditions, but themselves generate injustices that are irreducible to individual actions.[37]

Such structures enable and constrain patterns of globalized production, distribution, and

consumption, magnifying and transforming the effects of individual action. They generate injustices

when they "put large categories of persons under a systematic threat of domination or deprivation

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hidden from the person himself." Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 179. Similarly, because an individual is only ever revealed within a web of interrelations, speech and action "reveal an agent, but this agent is not an author or producer. Somebody began it and is its subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely, its actor and sufferer, but nobody is its author" (184). On this more complicated reading of Arendtian action see: Patchen Markell, "Anonymous Glory," *European Journal of Political Theory* 16, no. 1. Nietzsche's own understanding of action is similar, I contend. For him, it is impossible to separate one's being from one's actions; one comes into being only through action, as expressions of will to power. This is necessarily relational: only in encountering opposing and conflict wills is the will to power individuated. See: Pippin, *Nietzsche, Psychology, & First Philosophy*, 77-80 and Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, 81-89. Thus, both Arendt and Nietzsche can be interpreted as having expressivist accounts of action.

[36] Garrath Williams, "Love and Responsibility: A Political Ethic for Hannah Arendt," *Political Studies* 46, no. 5 (1998): 946.

[37] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 53. Young argues that social structures share four key characteristics. First, they constitute "objective social facts" that both constrain and enable action; second, they organize social space in which position and relations matter; third, they are formed and maintained through action; fourth, they can generate unintended consequences (53-64).

[…] at the same time as these processes enable others to dominate." These injustices "occur as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting in pursuit of their particular goals and interests, within given institutional rules and accepted norms" (114). In such cases, conceptualizing responsibility in terms of moral guilt or legal liability ultimately fails because consequences cannot be directly traced to individuals violating moral or legal norms. Politics requires, in Young's words "a different conception of responsibility to refer to the obligations that agents have who participate in structural social processes with unjust outcomes."[38]

To demonstrate this idea, Young turns to the global garment industry. Describing the connection between inexpensive clothing purchased in the developed world and the sweatshops where they are produced in the developing world, Young shows how the globally distributed structures of production, distribution, and consumption of garments generates injustices for which there lacks a directly liable agent, while also creating plausible circumstances that mitigate any one person's responsibility.[39] Young thus contends that these constitute a structural injustice as they "further the interests of so many diverse actors differently related to the apparel industry, and are produced by a large number of individuals and organizations acting on those interests." Additionally, "These structural economic and political processes involve actors and institutions both inside and outside the countries that host the factories, and these processes both enable and provide incentives for some actions at the same time that they block or constrain alternatives."[40] The structure of the world consists of a series of interrelated dynamic processes that bring about potentially globally distributed effects that are irreducible to the actions of individual participants.

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[38] *Ibid.*, "Responsibility and Global Justice," 118.

[39] See: *Ibid.*, *Responsibility for Justice*, Chapter 5 and Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Labor Justice " *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 4 (2004).

[40] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 133.

By expanding upon Arendt's account, Young adds greater political depth to anticipatory responsibility. Whereas Arendt treats economic and social relations as apolitical,[41] Young insists that they are important objects of concern for political responsibility. Social and economic structures shape the contours of the world, determining who may appear and how they may appear. Ensuring the future possibility of human flourishing, therefore, requires that the world is constituted so as to allow it. Hence, Young articulates a "social-connection model of responsibility" which is derived from "belonging together with others in a system of interdependent processes of cooperation and competition through which we seek benefits and aim to realize projects. […] All who dwell within the structures must take responsibility for remedying injustices they cause, though none is specifically liable for the harm in a legal sense."[42] That is, while it is impossible to ascribe moral responsibility to any individual for building the structures that organize the world, Young grounds responsibility in one's contribution to and participation in these structures.

Inspired by Young's social-connection model, taking anticipatory responsibility for the world requires taking responsibility for these political, legal, social, and economic structures that constitute it. Rather than isolating individuals from these structural processes through ascriptions of moral responsibility, anticipatory responsibility offers a challenge to take responsibility for them, to reform and rebuild them in such a way that one can say "But I will it thus! I shall will it thus" (*TSZ*: "Redemption")! Anticipatory responsibility does not adjudicate liability or guilt for the causal generation of these structures, but it also refuses to treat structures as inherent, impersonal, and unchangeable aspects of the world. Taking responsibility, claiming them as extensions of one's own

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[41] In both cases, they are not spaces of freedom where individuals can appear. On relations of economic production see: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 109-135. On the social sphere see: 38-49. Patchen Markell, in contrast to this standard reading of Arendt, complicates the distinctions between labor, work, and action, suggesting that action is not entirely separate from social or economic concerns, but can never be reduced to mere instrumental action. Patchen Markell, "Arendt's Work: On the Architecture of 'the Human Condition'," *College Literature* 38, no. 1 (2011).

[42] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 105.

will, is to place them, in the language of Chapter 3, in a domain of concern and regard. Those who

claim responsibility for these structures must account for whether they facilitate or curtail human

flourishing: if the structures unjustly limit humans from developing their powers of action, action

must be taken to reform them in response. This furthermore, adds greater specificity to the previous

chapter's discussion of Nietzsche's account of value-legislation. Anticipatory responsibility is a

responsibility to create and maintain life-affirming values, but values are not free standing cognitive

beliefs, but internalized in and expressed through social practices and political institutions. In this

sense, the meaning of the earth is determined not through ideas alone, but through the social

structures which determine its appearance and constitution. Anticipatory responsibility's claim to

give the earth its meaning, therefore, requires reforming and maintaining the structure of the world.

Therefore, Nietzsche's call to remain faithful to the earth serves not only as a warning

against appealing to other-worldly standards of judgment, but against the solipsistic withdrawal into

the self. Despite Arendt's criticism of Nietzsche's skepticism as a form of philosophic withdrawal,[43]

anticipatory responsibility points towards an active involvement in the affairs of the world as a sign

of one's faith in the earth. Zarathustra frequently fails to see the value of such involvement, seeking

solace from "rabble" who poison the world with decadence (*TSZ*: "Rabble") and those who

misinterpret his teaching (*TSZ*: "Child with the Mirror"). It is only by actually dwelling with the

thought of ERS – the truth that one cannot escape the world and that one is inexorably bound by

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[43] Arendt characterizes Nietzsche's unceasing questioning and attempts to create new values as a sign of the nihilistic danger inherent in the activity of thinking. See: Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, T.176. Dana Villa provides an excellent overview of the differences and the stakes of their disagreement, including a revision of his previous work which viewed them as far more congruent. See: Dana Villa, "How 'Nietzschean' Was Arendt?," in *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche's Legacy for Political Thought*, ed. Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008). Vasti Roodt challenges attempts to either prove either their compatibility or incompatibility, and instead interprets both Nietzsche and Arendt as providing different perspectives on overcoming resentment of the world. Vasti Roodt, "Nietzsche and/or Arendt?," ibid. Rosalyn Diprose reads Nietzsche and Arendt alongside each other as concerned with the fate of responsibility in modernity. While Diprose finds Nietzsche valuable for identifying the role of affect and suffering in theorizing responsibility, she relies on Arendt to do much of the heavy lifting, both to show what this new theory of responsibility would entail as well as to save this theory from Nietzsche's apparent aristocratism. See: Rosalyn Diprose, "Arendt and Nietzsche on Responsibility and Futurity," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 34, no. 6 (2008).

even that which one detests – that Zarathustra is able to overcome his nausea at the world. Such a call to responsibility can animate political action to take possession of the world and reform it, rather than cynically condemn it. Nietzsche's call to give the earth a "human meaning" (*TSZ*: "Bestowing Virtue," 2), like Arendt's *amor mundi*, is a call to care for the space of human freedom and creativity. It is important to remember that for Arendt, "the earth is the very quintessence of the human condition;"[44] Zarathustra's terrestrial language serves as an important reminder to attend to our condition as earthlings.

Yet Nietzsche's language of earth complicates Arendt's conception of world. For Arendt, there are important distinctions between world and earth, reserving world for the human made space of appearance demarcated physically by walls and politically by laws.[45] This distinction is necessary to provide a unique space for human beings to appear in their plurality and act freed from demands of biological necessity and the cycles of nature; this distinctive space of freedom is a necessary check against the reduction of human beings to mere life processes to be managed.[46]

Rather than siding with Nietzsche *or* Arendt, I argue that anticipatory responsibility draws sustenance from both as a political ethic of responsibility. Arendt's warnings on the danger of dissolving the boundaries between the world of politics and the natural world is a crucial reminder of the danger of a pure Dionysian intoxication. Anticipatory responsibility is a responsibility to preserve value pluralism, perspectivism, and the possibility of contestation, as well as the institutions

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[44] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2.

[45] On walls, she writes: "the public space does not become politically until it is secured within a city, is bound, that is, to a concrete place that survives both those memorable deeds and the names of those memorable men […] it is purposefully built around its public space, the agora, where free men could meet as peers on any occasion." "Introduction *into* Politics," 123. On laws, she similarly writes: "All laws first create a space in which they are valid, and this space is the world in which we can move about in freedom. What lies outside this space is without law and, even more precisely, without world" (190).

[46] See: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 314-315. For Arendt, totalitarian violence is rooted on the destruction of the individual's ability to appear as an individual. See: Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Inc, [1951] 1976), 452-57. This concern also underscores her critique of the New Left's embrace of violent means for political emancipation. See: "A Special Supplement: Reflections on Violence," *The New York Review of Books*, February 27 1969.

which make such activities possible. As seen in the previous section's dialogue with Jonas, a Nietzschean project of destruction must be accompanied by one of preservation. Therefore, the language of earth offers the necessary reminder that the walls and laws that preserve political space are themselves embedded in an entire ecosystem of non-human processes and objects. It is not simply that taking responsibility for the political world cannot avoid taking responsibility for the natural world, but that the strict binary separation of the two is itself irresponsible. Failing to see, and engage, the connections between politics and nature, between the human and non-human, between interacting processes in a global ecosystem, is as irresponsible of a withdrawal from the world of appearance as the philosopher's withdrawal into the life of the mind. Expanding Arendt's web of relations beyond the human world of artifice is necessary to understand the true scope and breadth of anticipatory responsibility.[47]

The temporal orientation and worldly grounding of anticipatory responsibility are not unrelated. "The point is not to compensate for the past," as Young writes, "but for all who contribute to processes producing unjust outcomes to work to transform those processes."[48] While primarily forward looking, Young's social-connection model, as Jade Larissa Schiff argues, cannot eschew forms of causal reasoning or accounting for the history of these structures.[49] ERS offers the important reminder that taking responsibility occurs within time rather than outside of it, and that taking responsibility for the world requires accounting for the world as we find it. As such, it does

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[47] Myers similarly argues for a more expansive conception of world that draws on Arendt but challenges strict binaries between nature and culture. See: *Worldly Ethics*, 90-91.

[48] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 109. To help temper the risks of responsibility becoming an overwhelming burden, as discussed earlier, or a frenetic activity with no larger purpose, Young recommends certain "parameters of reasoning" to help political actors orient themselves within these structures and determine specific targets of action. She identifies "power," "privilege," "interest," and "collective ability" as parameters that affect the degree to which one is obliged to take political responsibility (144-147). These parameters seek to track positionality within a social structure: the more one directly contributes or directly benefits, the greater one's responsibility.

[49] Jade Larissa Schiff, *Burdens of Political Responsibility: Narrative and the Cultivation of Responsiveness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 32.

not ignore or absolve the past – as Arendt notes, "every government assumes responsibility for the deeds and misdeeds of its predecessors and every nation for the deeds and misdeeds of the past"[50] – but takes stock of how the world came to be structured in this way and identifies possibilities to reform unjust structures. It is thus a realist project of negotiating the structure of the world from within rather than imposing extra-worldly or a-temporal standards of morality upon it.

Read in dialogue with Arendt and Young, Nietzschean anticipatory responsibility frames responsibility in terms of political action rather than guilt, liability, or debt. By centering political, economic, and social structures rather than individual deeds and inspiring continual action aimed towards the future rather than settling the past, anticipatory responsibility can fruitfully be read in terms of a political ethic of responsibility. Such responsibility for the world requires, like Ella Myers's ethics of "caring for the world," "a shift in perspective, one which involves decentering both oneself and suffering Other(s) in order to bring into view the collective conditions, including worldly practices, habits, and laws" that constitute the world and generate suffering.[51]

Conceiving of responsibility towards the world in terms of the structure of the world also distinguishes anticipatory responsibility from the Satkunanandan's account of "extraordinary" or "constitutive" responsibility. Like anticipatory responsibility, her account emphasizes attentiveness to the world itself over ascribing specific liability or accountability for a given action. Thus, she describes "the inexhaustible responsibility constitutive of being human," which takes the form of "an ongoing 'call' to pay attention to our world and our place within it."[52] This sense of responsibility is grounded in an ontological account of humanity's belonging to the world; one takes on or acts responsibly by responding to the world's constant claim upon human beings and

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[50] Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," 149.
[51] Myers, *Worldly Ethics*, 109.
[52] Satkunanandan, *Extraordinary Responsibility*, 6.

whatever particular demand it makes upon an individual at a given time (89-90). Such an account of responsiveness to the world itself explicitly gives "no material direction on what I ought to do," but instead offers an "indirect" ethical disposition, whereby individuals are better attuned to the dilemmas of the world and better able to respond (90).

Recalling the conception of political concepts developed in Chapter 1, anticipatory responsibility offers a more political interpretation to Satkunanandan's more existential account. Anticipatory responsibility incorporates both an understanding of concepts as contestable and imaginative as well as an account of the world as structured by relations of power into its own theoretical architecture. The world imagined by anticipatory responsibility is neither simply given nor an incomprehensible depth, but is constituted by particular configurations of power that are historically determined and contingent. In taking responsibility, one responds to a specific political dilemma generated by these structures, rather than a phenomenological sense of belonging to the world. The world is no less uncertain, complex, and beset with contingencies, however. Anticipatory responsibility treats these as immanent to politics itself, a domain of competing values and claims, where distributions of power imply winners and losers, and where one's actions generate innumerable unforeseen consequences. Like Satkunanandan's position, anticipatory responsibility cannot be reduced to an accounting process that balances moral debts; however, it also insists that the world must always be understood as politically constituted rather than ontologically given.

Anticipatory responsibility's broadened scope does, however, raise the concern of eliminating the possibility of holding individuals accountable for their specific contributions to the world. Arendt makes this apprehension explicit in her account of Adolph Eichmann's trial. She criticizes its focus on "anti-Semitism throughout history," rather than the particularity of Eichmann

and his crimes.[53] Instead, she insists that a court room should maintain the possibility of individual

responsibility:

> it is equally fortunate that there exists still one institution in society in which it is
> well-nigh impossible to evade issues of personal responsibility, where all justifications
> of a nonspecific, abstract nature – from the Zeitgeist down the Oedipus complex –
> break down, where not systems or trends or original sin are judged, but men of flesh
> and blood like you and me, whose deeds are of course still human deeds but appear
> before a tribunal because they have broken some law whose maintenance we regard
> as essential for the integrity of our common humanity.[54]

In foregrounding the often impersonal and global structures that constitute the world, anticipatory

responsibility may risk eroding any sense of individual responsibility.

While understandable, this anxiety is overstated. Anticipatory responsibility does not replace

or eschew all forms of individual accountability or legal liability, but describes an additional and

expanded sense of responsibility, irreducible to individualistic, legalistic, or moralistic thinking.

Ascriptions of responsibility are politically laden judgments not pre-ordained metaphysical decrees.

Therefore, individual ascriptions of guilt or liability are possible, but not necessary or exhaustive,

responses to a dilemma in the world. Anticipatory responsibility is another, more capacious,

response that looks to the structural conditions that produced the dilemma. Arendt herself points in

this direction by arguing that the Eichmann trial demonstrated the limits of modern jurisprudential

assumptions that "intent to do wrong is necessary for the commission of a crime."[55] Even more

controversially her discussion of the complicity of Jewish leaders in the Holocaust suggest that

responsibility is more multifaceted and ambivalent than contemporary moral and legal thinking

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[53] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, [1963] 2006), 19.
[54] "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Shocken Books, [1964] 2003), 21-22. She explicitly links the banality of evil with the "widespread tendency to refuse to judge at all" and the inability to hold individuals accountable for the actions. "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy," in *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Shocken Books, [1966] 2003), 146. Compare Arendt's concern to Hayek's own critique of collective responsibility, discussed in Chapter 2, Section II.
[55] Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 277.

allow.[56] Holding an individual responsible for egregious, or even seemingly trivial, crimes may be

necessary, even in light of extenuating circumstances. But such a judgment neither exhausts the

work of anticipatory responsibility nor absolves one's responsibility to transform the structure of the

world to preclude the creation of such circumstances in the future.

Prioritizing structures over individual action further alters discussions of welfare politics. In

contradistinction to narratives of moral responsibility championed in the late twentieth century, it

centers the social and economic structures as primary objects of political analysis and action,

including financialization and globalization, the differences and changes in regulatory environments,

industrial automation and shifts in the labor market, and the geographical distribution of industries

and job openings. These structural factors are obscured by moralizing discourses of personal

responsibility, which isolate those in poverty by drawing straight causal lines from individual choices

and behavior to outcomes.[57] Instead anticipatory responsibility interrogates how the social,

economic, and political systems and institutions that one participates perpetuate, rather than relieve,

poverty and inequality. Instead of locating blame for poverty in either "the undeserving poor" or

"greedy bankers," it identifies objects for political action going forward. Taking anticipatory

responsibility for poverty requires concerted action to reform these structures – of finance, labor,

education, etc. – so as not only address the existing injustice but also to ensure that they create

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[56] *Ibid.*, 117-126. This is not to suggest that the German people or Jewish Councils are equally as guilty as Eichmann. As she states in another essay, Arendt denies the existence of anything resembling collective guilt, as "where all are guilty, no one is." Arendt "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," 21. Therefore, I follow Young's reading that Arendt is describing different types of responsibility, of which legal liability, moral responsibility, and political responsibility are all examples, which have their own particular logics and domains of appropriateness. See Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 81-91. These different ways of being responsible are neither mutually exclusive nor mutually implicative. One can be politically responsible for unjust economic structures without being directly violating a law or moral norm; identifying a broader political responsibility to address economic exploitation in a particular region need not always exempt residents of that region from legal prosecution.

[57] It is important to note that Young, at least, believes that structural causation and individual moral responsibility are not mutually exclusive. She writes, "A sensible understanding of the sources of *any* person's situation, whether poor or not, should refer *both* to the structural constraints and opportunities he or she faces, *and* to his or her choices and actions in relation to them." *Responsibility for Justice*, 26.

conditions of possible flourishing. This may involve working to alleviate inequalities within the educational system, especially in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty or instituting financial reform which limits the ability of banks to engage in predatory lending or banking practices.[58] In sum, anticipatory responsibility demands accounting for the systematic deprivations produced by current structures and working to reform them to facilitate human flourishing.

Anticipatory responsibility still faces significant political theoretical questions, as currently articulated. First, how is it to be discharged in the political world, given its call to take responsibility for and reform existing structures? Given that these structures may have entrenched histories, a potentially global scale, and involve millions of individual actors and interactions, it is difficult to see how such responsibility is possible? How does one take responsibility, for example, for the globalized patterns of production, distribution, and consumption that allow Americans to purchase inexpensive clothing produced in inhumane working conditions? Second, how can responsibility for the future of the world itself be borne without either becoming an overwhelming burden paralyzing action or devolving into an attempt to dominate the world? Given the enormous challenge of such a political project, the twin temptations of despair and eschatological hope re-appear. The subsequent two sections of this chapter take up these questions by arguing that anticipatory responsibility requires engaging in political action, including mobilizing mechanisms of legitimate power and making authoritative decisions. This burden is only discharged responsibly when borne in common.

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[58] For example, Young suggests a system that offers publically funded lifelong educational opportunities, so that one can always be developing one's potentials through acquiring new knowledge or skill. Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 22. Among the "collective conditions" that must be cared for, Myers lists: "inequitable international trade policies, patterns of uncompensated resource extraction in developing countries, agricultural subsidies, wasteful consumption among the world's most well-off, paltry social services in the United States, and so on." Myers, *Worldly Ethics*, 109.

IV-Discharging Responsibility through Political Power

As a political ethic, taking anticipatory responsibility will necessarily require taking action and making decisions to restructure the shape of the political world, which will require binding decisions with distributional consequences. Nietzsche understood as much, linking a will to responsibility with a will to authority and the ability bind "generations forwards and backwards *ad infinitum*" (*TI*: "Expeditions," 39). This requires significant political power, and the ability to mobilize legitimate coercive force. Hence, Arendt writes that "there exist extreme situations in which the responsibility for the world, which is primarily political, cannot be assumed because political responsibility presupposes at least a minimum of political power."[59] That is, anticipatory responsibility is a political ethic not only because it is about politics – a responsibility for the political world – but also because it can only be discharged through politics: taking responsibility for the world means gathering and exercising political power to build, maintain, and reform political institutions.[60]

Nietzsche himself uses the language of legislation. Not only are "*true philosophers*" "*commanders and legislators*" (*BGE*: 211), but Zarathustra entrusts the responsibility for the future to the "creator" who "writes new values on new tablets" (*TSZ*: "Old and New Tablets," 26). He describes such wills as "hard:" "The creators are hard after all. And it must seem like bliss to you to press your hand upon millennia as if upon wax – bliss to write upon the will of millennia as if upon bronze" (*TSZ*: "Old and New Tablets," 29). Where Nietzsche's use is metaphorical for creating new values, we should take this language literally. To take responsibility for the world, to determine the shape of its appearance is not a matter of philosophic or ethical self-creation, but can only be achieved through political action. Only by harnessing legitimate coercive power can one hope to affect lasting change

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[59] Arendt, "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship," 45.
[60] Young helpfully summarizes this conception thusly: "the exercise of responsibility is *political* in Arendt's sense, only when it involves the active participation of citizens, rather than being merely the expression of interests or wishes of state officials in their bureaucratic functions." *Responsibility for Justice*, 89.

on the structure of the world. Zarathustra's withdrawal from the world, and Nietzsche's own turn

from political power to artistic self-creation, thus are an abdication of anticipatory responsibility.

To theorize responsibility politically, recalling Chapter 1, is to link it to questions of

producing, using, and distributing power. Weber usefully defines politics in terms of striving "for a

share of power or to influence the distribution of power, whether between states or between the

groups of people contained in a state."[61] Responding to the world, therefore, involves exercising

power, which shifts one's perspective from individual ethical practices on the self or moral

evaluation to how existing relations of power are structured. As Arendt notes, "Power springs up

whenever people get together and act in concert;" therefore "all political institutions are

manifestations and materializations of power."[62] Because such structures act as enabling and

constraining conditions while are simultaneously produced and reproduced only through human

action, changing the structure of the world requires affecting human action through changing the

"power differentials and power differentials" that constitute the structure.[63]

But where Arendt distinguishes power from force and violence, it is important to maintain

Weber's conceptual link between power and "the legitimate use of force."[64] While Arendt's concern

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[61] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 33. He continues: "When we say that a question is 'political,' […] we always mean the same thing. This is that the interests involved in the distribution or preservation of power, or a shift in power, play a decisive role in resolving that question or in influence that decision or defining the sphere of activity of the official concerned." This in many ways is complementary to the account of politics developed in Chapter 1, drawing on Freeden, for whom, "the underlying rationale of politics is the quest for finality and decisiveness in the affairs of groups." Freeden, *Political Theory of Political Thinking*, 22. As such the use of power cuts across all dimensions of politics (34-35) and power is "a specific and fundamental feature of the political and starts from the assumption that it is conceptually and practically impossible to forgo power relationships in a society. Power relations and the actual wielding of power are endemic to all human relationships (279).

[62] Arendt, "Reflections on Violence."

[63] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 61.

[64] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 34. Arendt specifically cites Weber's account as complicit in the conflation of politics as a form of rule, rather than a distinctive activity of freedom among individuals. See: "Reflections on Violence." That we think of politics in terms of "the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the public means of force," is a sign for Arendt that "brute force, which is supposed to safeguard life and freedom, has become so monstrously powerful that it threatens not only freedom but life as well." "Introduction *into* Politics," 146-147. Arendt maintains this distinction to separate politics, which is based on power exercised through communication and action in concert, from instrumental logics. While violence can be justified in appropriate cases, such as self-defense, totalitarian governments, or a denial of power, power, and therefore politics, "needs no justification it is inherent in the very existence of political communities."

that the political realm has been colonized by brute force is compelling, insisting on a romantic

conception of politics pure from the exercise of coercive force is no less irresponsible. Not only

because contemporary politics, as Arendt herself admits, involves the use of coercive force, but

because in politics, as Weber notes, "we find ourselves caught up in a conflict of ultimate

worldviews, and it falls to us to *choose* between them."[65] The political realm is neither one of simply

administration – finding the optimal distribution of resources and duties – nor one of pure

expression, persuasion, and deliberation. Instead, decisions over competing claims must be made

and actions must be taken even when, or especially when, there is no consensus over how the world

should be structured. Or, as Jane Mansbridge puts it, "In a large, interdependent and continuing

polity, democracy requires coercion – getting people to do what they would otherwise not do

through the use of force or threat of sanction. […] Irreconcilable conflict combined with the

necessity for action leads ineluctably to the requirement of coercion."[66]

Anticipatory responsibility further heights the need for coercion beyond that of conflicting

interests or value pluralism. Both because it calls for action that will last and be binding into the

future and because reforming structures that organize behavior into regular and habitual patterns of

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When politics is subordinated to these instrumental logics, it no longer allows for human beings to appear in their plurality and exercise freedom, but becomes another means of managing and controlling life. See: "Reflections on Violence." Yet at the same time, she admits a complicated relationship between the two. Politics is only possible because of the space created by law, which she acknowledges "has something violent about it in terms of both its origins and its nature […] The law produces the arena where politics occurs, and contains in itself the violent force inherent in all production." Politics, or coming together and acting with others without the use of force, is only possible through a prior use of force. "Introduction *into* Politics," 181.

[65] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 79. Arendt's own conception of politics should entail this conclusion, as she notes that "there is nothing in either the sensate or the historical-political world that has assumed full reality for us as a thing or event until all its aspects have been discovered, all its sides revealed, and it has been acknowledged and articulated from every possible stand-point within the human world." 'Introduction *into* Politics," 175. On the irreducibility of conflict in politics see also: Hampshire, *Justice as Conflict*; Williams, *Beginning was the Deed*, 84-85 and Isaiah Berlin, "Does Political Theory Still Exist?," in *Concepts and Categories:Philosophical Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1961] 2013), 149-50.

[66] Jane Mansbridge, "Using Power/Fighting Power," *Constellations* 1, no. 1 (1999): 56. Mansbridge further justifies coercion out of a concern for equal concern: not coercing, and not acting, would provide an undue privilege to the status quo. She continues to argue that because coercion is unavoidable, it requires a constant vigilance of the citizenry who must work to delegitimize coercive power when used to support injustice (62-64). This idea will be taken up ore explicitly in the next section.

behavior, disagreement and conflict will only be intensified. As they are routinized, social processes are thought of in terms of "masses of individuals [who] believe they are following the rules, minding their own business, and trying to accomplish their legitimate goals."[67] Changes to such routines will be difficult, as existing social processes and ways of life become naturalized and unquestioned, even for well-meaning individuals.[68] The need for exerting coercive force to create structural change becomes even more pressing when it is acknowledged that structures are not neutral, but that "an agent's position in structural processes usually carries with it a specific degree of potential or actual power or influence," and "privilege that coincides with that power."[69] Some individuals and groups enormously benefit from the status quo and have a vested interest in blocking the type of structural change that anticipator responsibility envisions. In such cases, deliberation, persuasion, and mobilizing of common power, in the pure Arendtian sense, is unlikely to be sufficient. Instead, mobilizing coercive force, whether through state sanction, economic boycott, or direct action, will be necessary.

Rather than reducing politics to the "battlefield of brute force" as Arendt fears,[70] the necessities of using coercive force only heighten the importance of anticipatory responsibility as a political ethic. Nietzsche's critique of democracy as "No shepherd and one herd" (*TSZ*: "Prologue," 5) points to the danger that democratic politics – rule by no one – could displace and obscure responsibility, of which Arendt knew too well.[71] Anticipatory responsibility cannot be just dynamic action or use of power for its own sake; instead, Nietzsche insists on the importance of imposing value or meaning upon the world, a claim for which one must be answerable to. In this light, his

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[67] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 63.
[68] For a thorough study of the difficulty in overcoming such barriers to acknowledgement and for potential means to cultivate responsiveness, see: Schiff.
[69] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 144-145.
[70] Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," 199.
[71] See, for example: "Collective Responsibility," 147.

appeals to nobility and aristocratic values both point to the difficulties of taking such responsibility and offer a provocation for those who consider themselves of firm conviction. Responding to the world with action in and answering for the actions taken, rather than displacing such responsibility to a nameless people or a transcendental moral standard, requires a firm character that Nietzsche finds lacking in modernity.

Similarly, for Weber, because "in politics, the decisive means is the use of force,"[72] the political leader "acts exclusively on his *own* responsibility, a responsibility that he may not and cannot refuse or shuffle off onto someone else" (54). This "ethics of responsibility" is contrasted with an "ethics of conviction" (83). The former, in recognition that "the achievement of 'good' ends is inseparable from the use of morally dubious or at least dangerous means and that we cannot escape the possibility or even probability of evil side effects," takes responsibility for the consequences, even if unintended, of one's actions. In contrast, one who conceives of politics as the expression of an absolutist ethics or of one's personal convictions "believes that if an action performed out of pure conviction has evil consequences, then the responsibility must lie not with the agent but with the world, the stupidity of men – or the will of God who created them thus" (84). In contrast to moral responsibility which traces causality to calm the anxiety of an uncertain political world, for Weber, responsibility is taken amidst this uncertainty. Because we cannot know the full outcome of our actions, because our best intentions may result in harmful unintended consequences, because our actions might fail, it is all the more necessary to take anticipatory responsibility, claiming authorship for our actions.[73]

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[72] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 84. Later Weber recapitulates: "the specific use of *legitimate force* purely as such in the hands of human organization is what determines the particular nature of all ethical problems in politics" (89).
[73] On the relationship between Weberian responsibility and uncertainty see also: Satkunanandan, *Extraordinary Responsibility*, 152-159.

Nietzsche's account of value creation may strike many as closer to an ethics of conviction than one of responsibility. Zarathustra's own disregard for politics, his solitude, and his call for humanity "to break the good and the tablets of the good" and launch "onto their high seas" towards an unknown future, all suggest a disregard for the consequences of such action (*TSZ*: "Old and New Tablets," 28). Yet unless it enters the political realm of action, decision, and coercion, anticipatory responsibility will remain little more than artistic, ethical, or philosophical project. For Nietzsche's project to animate the political action necessary to take responsibility for the world's future, it will have to engage in the use of force and thus have to reckon with and account for the consequences of this action. Zarathustra himself states that "In all commanding it seemed to me there is an experiment and a risk […] even when it commands itself, even then it must pay for its commanding. It must become the judge and avenger and victim of its own law" (*TSZ*: "Self-Overcoming"). A concern with consequences seems inevitable, and as Weber writes, "Whoever makes a pact with the use of force, for whatever ends (and every politician does so), is at the mercy of its particular consequences."[74]

Even further, Weber's critique of the ethics of conviction complements Nietzsche's own critique of the moral world-order. Weber objects to the "unworldly [*akosmistischen*] imperatives" of an ethics of conviction for making "absolute demands" to which the world could never measure up (88). Such thinking will always fail, both because of the irreconcilable worldviews that cannot be resolved through persuasion and because the unconditional demands of such an ethic are impossible to actualize in the world. Taking the Sermon on the Mount as an example, Weber writes,

> The Gospel's commandment is unconditional and unambiguous: give up everything that thou has–absolutely *everything*. The politician will say that socially this is a senseless demand as long as it does not apply to *everyone*. That means taxation, redistribution, confiscation–in a word, coercion and order applied to *everyone*. The ethical commandment, however, ignores such matters *entirely*; that is their nature (89).

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[74] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 89.

Ethical imperatives, as absolute claims that apply universally, ignore the political realities of realizing these commands. It is not only inappropriate, therefore, to treat politics as a medium for achieving such otherworldly goals, but doing so also obscures that politics inherently requires coercion and generates winners and losers.

Nietzsche similarly rejects unconditional ethical demands. Empirically, such claims are disproved by an undisputable moral pluralism "in the variety of people's tables of goods" and "what they think counts as actually *owning* and *possessing* a good" (*BGE*: 194; see also 294). For Nietzsche, "The moral earth, too, has its antipodes! The antipodes, too, have their right to exist" (*GS*: 289)! Moral values represent different cultural and communal attempts to make sense of the world and organize social life, not imperatives of practical reason. Furthermore, value pluralism is not merely a sociological fact, but a normative good for Nietzsche, as the conflict and contestation generated by such pluralism prevents nihilistic despair and inspires human creativity and action.[75] In addition to closing he space for value contestation and self-creation, absolutist morality also creates, , a nihilistic devaluation of the world in which passions, the body, and anything finite and temporal are devalued as flawed, sinful, and the sources of suffering (*TI*: "Morality as Anti-Nature").

Therefore, Nietzsche's critique of the moral world-order aligns with Weber's critique of an ethics of conviction. Both subjugate the contingency and uncertainty of the world in terms of absolutist otherworldly demands. For Nietzsche, this takes the form of interpreting the world as sinful: "Chance robbed of its innocence; misfortunate dirtied by the concept 'sin'; well-being as a danger, as 'temptation'; physiological indisposition poisoned by the worm of conscience" (*A*: 25).[76]

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[75] On the importance of conflict for Nietzsche, see: Acampora, *Nietzsche's Contest,* 109-112. As Conway notes, Nietzsche's value pluralism is not a relativism. Instead, he favors pluralism but organized in a hierarchy of "ethical communities, each equipped with a distinctive morality that reflects its unique needs and strengths." Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political*, 31. See also: Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, 262-264.

[76] In the next section, Nietzsche continues: "That there exists once and for all a will of God as to what man is to do and what he is not to do; that the value of nation, of an individual is to be measured by how much or how little obedience is

For Weber, such moralistic thinking transforms partisans into "chiliastic prophets" who are "unable to tolerate the ethical irrationality of the world" and become "cosmic ethical 'rationalist[s]'."[77] Such thinking, no longer bound by consequences, quickly can be used to justify any and all atrocities, or as Nietzsche writes: "*every* means hitherto employed with the intention of making mankind moral has been thoroughly *immoral*" (*TI*: "Improvers of Mankind," 5).

Instead, anticipatory responsibility requires the maturity to recognize, in Weber's words, that "life is governed by completely different principles of compensation and retribution, principles that we can interpret metaphysically or that are destined always to elude our attempts at interpretation." It requires the sober realization that "the world was governed by demons and that whoever becomes involved with politics, that is to say, with power and violence as a means, has made a pact with satanic powers."[78] Taking responsibility must begin with Zarathustra's sobering reminder that "this world, the eternally imperfect, the mirror image and imperfect image of an eternal contradiction" (*TSZ*: "Hinterworldly"), without fleeing from the this world of eternal flux and contradiction made up by power and conflict. Anticipatory responsibility is only taking by remaining faithful to this world, its uncertainties and contingencies and to "work on the future, and to creatively redeem everything that *was*. To redeem what is past in mankind and to recreate all 'It was' until the will speaks: 'But I wanted it so! I shall want it so –" (*TSZ*: "Old and New Tablets," 3).

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accorded the will of God; that the *ruling power* of the will of God, expressed as punishment and reward according to the degree of obedience, is demonstrated in the destiny of a nation, of an individual" (*A*:26). See also the discussion in Chapter 3.

[77] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 85.

[78] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 86. He continues: "It follows that as far as a person's actions are concerned, it is *not* true that nothing but good comes from good and nothing but evil from evil, but rather quite frequently the opposite is the case. Anyone who does not realize this is in fact a mere child in political matters." Vázquez-Arroyo draws on Machiavelli to make a similar point: "The need of a political actor to inhabit predicaments of power at once constrained and fractured, mediated by necessity and accidents, in whose interstices, or, to be more precise, from within whose interstices a mediated novum can emerge." He continues, "It is not that the political field is immoral or bereft of ethical principles, but rather, it is morally indifferent – or, more precisely, 'extra moral.'" *Political Responsibility*, 222. Tracy Strong finds a similar political lesson in Nietzsche: "Politics requires something of the Dionysian to be politics. Those who want a politics without the Dionysian would then not really want politics, but only the security of a story with an ethical ending." Strong, "Nietzsche's Political Misappropriation," 142.

As Weber writes, to act in politics requires "the trained ability to scrutinize the realities of life ruthless, to withstand them and to measure up to the inwardly."[79] Zarathustra's insistence on "thus I willed it" (*TSZ*: "Redemption"), on responding to the world as it is and claiming authorship for one's creative work within the world describes the disposition of Weber's responsible political leader. Anticipatory responsibility, it should be recalled, does not impose "a divine law" or a "signpost for me to overearths and paradises" (*TSZ*: "Pleasure and Pain"), but nevertheless requires someone, motivated by a love for the earth and a convinced desire to legislate new values for it, who can say with Luther and Weber: "Here I stand, I can do no other."[80] Only such a person can take on the burden of being a political leader, and unite an ethics of conviction with an ethics of responsibility. Anticipatory responsibility requires both complementary ethics, the desire to create something great and lasting in the world and a recognition that all such action may come to naught.

"Politics means a slow, powerful drilling through hard boards, with a mixture of passion and a sense of proportion," Weber writes (93).[81] It is an arena of conflict, beset by uncertainty, devoid of transcendental moral guarantees or decision rules that nevertheless requires decisions which will

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[79] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 91. Satkunanandan helpfully reminds us that this sober response to the world means that absolute convictions can sometimes be necessary: "The fundamental responsibility to respond to the world grounds the need to consider and take account of morality as an always existing claim on us […] Weber suggests that sometimes an ethic of conviction may befit a political situation, though we could only come to this judgment honestly via the responsiveness to the world encouraged by an ethic of responsibility." Satkunanandan, *Extraordinary Responsibility*, 167.

[80] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 92.

[81] This exposes another fissure with Arendt, who rejects this account of politics as purposeful and goal-directed. "We ask about the meaning of political action, but what we mean are its goals and ends, and we call this meaning only because we really no longer believe that politics as any meaning in the literal sense." Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics" 197. Mary Dietz incisively critiques Arendt on these terms, as "Arendt's theory cannot conceptually vindicate either the emancipatory value of purposeful performance or the practical purposefulness of politics […] by assuming that the category of means and ends is necessarily (and not just contingently) afflicted with violent objectification, Arendt has to deny (or at least evade) the normative dimension of the active pursuit of substantive purposes in the space of appearances. Thus, although means-end activity is not excluded from Arendtian politics, it is always and only a negative formulation tied to fabrication." Mary G. Dietz, *Turning Operations; Feminism, Arendt, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 175. For Dietz, Arendt's performative account of politics should be supplemented by an account of "methodical politics" inspired by Weber and Simone Weil based on a problem orientation: "The problem orientation that defines methodical politics rests upon recognition of the political domain as a matrix of obstacles where it is impossible ever to secure an ideological fix or a single focus" (176).

inherently entail differential distributional consequences. There will always be winners and losers.[82]

Anticipatory responsibility must take responsibility for those losses without rationalizing them away or moralizing them; it must answer for them. "A politically literate political ethic," Vázquez-Arroyo writes, "refuses to surrender to the temptation of finding a pristine ethical anchoring for politics that antecedes the scenes of power one navigates and thus bypasses the need to contextually reckon with predicaments of power that defy any apodictic ethics or pristine ethical dispositions."[83] Taking anticipatory responsibility is not only to respond to the injustices generated by existing power relations, but to account for and reckon with the inevitable negative and unintended consequences of using power. Animated by the temporality of ERS, it is a political ethic that requires action amidst uncertainty, but also caution and attentiveness.

For example, taking responsibility for the political and economic structures that reproduce systematic poverty and economic inequality requires mobilizing political resources. Without discounting the value of charitable donations, communities of volunteers, and economic assistance for specific individuals, structural change cannot be accomplished through such local level action alone. Instead, these structural changes necessitate changes in tax structures, appropriations priorities, provision of healthcare, education, and affordable housing, as well as regulations covering manufacturing standards, workplace conditions, and personnel management. All of these require mobilizing the coercive powers of local, state, federal, and international governments and shaping and reshaping the legal environment within which economic activity operates. This is not to treat legal or state-based solutions as a panacea, as structural change will also require shifts in institutional cultures and biases, standard operating practices, and interpersonal relationships. Yet instituting a

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[82] As Williams notes: "a very important reason for thinking in terms of the political is that a political decision […] is that such a decision does not in itself announce that the other party was morally wrong or, indeed, wrong at all. What it immediately announces is that *they have lost*." *In the Beginning was the Deed*, 13.

[83] Vázquez-Arroyo, *Political Responsibility*, 252.

universal basic income or increasing regulations or taxes on financial speculation cannot be accomplished without taking control of state political apparatus.

Therefore, as a political ethic, anticipatory responsibility cannot dispense with questions of power or the necessary consequentialist thinking that the responsible use of power requires. Changes in the federal tax structure or welfare state so as to take responsibility for the pervasiveness and persistence of poverty will inevitably generate costs and losses for some, including for some these policies were intended to assist. Anticipatory responsibility cannot eliminate these risks of engaging in political life – treating with Weber's satanic powers – but it calls political agents to stand up and respond to the world's existing injustices rather than seeking "a mystical escape from the world."[84]

V- Bearing Responsibility in Common

This Weberian picture is not beyond reproach, however. Betraying his Nietzschean influences, he insists that the political vocation requires "a leader, and not only that, he must also be a hero – in a very literal sense."[85] Despite his insistence on a mature response to the world as it is, Weber's call for political heroism provides a romantic depiction of politics. In words that could have easily been Zarathustra's, he writes: "The only man who has a 'vocation' for politics is one who is certain that his spirit will not be broken if the world, when looked at from his point of view, proves too stupid or base to accept what he wishes to offer it, and who, when faced with all that obduracy, can still say 'Nevertheless!' despite everything."[86] The very mechanism that chastens anticipatory responsibility as it moves from Zarathustra's cave to the political realm – the need to take

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[84] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 93.

[85] *Ibid.* For a study of Nietzsche's influence on Weber's thought see: Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction*, trans. Keith Tribe (Lonson: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 146-62. For a comparison of Nietzsche's and Weber's account of morality see: Tracy B. Strong, "What Have We to Do with Morals?' Nietzsche and Weber on History and Ethics," *History of the Human Sciences* 5, no. 3 (1992).

[86] Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 93-94.

responsibility for consequences – ultimately narrows the scope of political activity to heroic individuals.

Not only does this risk reproducing the pathologies of personal responsibility discussed in Chapter 2 – obscuring the role of political structures and intensifying ascriptions of responsibility against individuals – transforming politics into a realm of heroic ambition again raises the question of whether anticipatory responsibility imagines an elitist politics. As was argued in the previous section, such language has important benefits. It poses an inspiring and provocative challenge that can motivate responsibility by appealing to pride and ambition, while also attuning political theorists and actors to the difficulties and risks of political action. However, anticipatory responsibility's almost limitless scope – taking responsibility for the structure of the world perpetually into the future – becomes an almost impossible burden that only the strongest of Weber's charismatic leaders, if any, could bear. If conceived of as an ethos of political leadership, anticipatory responsibility relives the majority of political citizens and actors of any responsibility.[87] Despite Weber's defense of the plebiscite leader as accountable to the people, David Beetham contends that, "as Weber must have known, their right to demand a referendum for the president's dismissal could only be a token one, since the initiative in such situations would be with the leader himself rather than with the disorganized mass."[88] Without a mechanism to actually hold such leaders responsible

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[87] As Wolfgang J. Mommsen notes, Weber "replaced the postulate of the free self-determination of the people […] with the principle of a *formally* free choice of leaders. The ordinary citizens were no longer supposed to actively participate as responsible individuals in the creation of public community life. […] There will no longer be any question of active participation by the people, in any form, in the material formulation of the political objectives to be pursued by the community. This will be the sole responsibility of the political leaders, who create the necessary following for the realization of their goals through their demagogic qualities." Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920*, trans. Michael S. Steinberg, 2nd Edition ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, [1959] 1974), 395. According to Mommsen, Weber was comfortable limiting the role of the people to a minimum level of acclaiming the leadership qualities of political leaders rather than evaluating specific political objectives (400-401).
[88] David Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics*, 2nd edition ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 238.

to the world, for which they claim, it is unclear at best how a distinction between an ethics of responsibility and an ethics of conviction can be maintained.[89]

Even more troubling is the potential that the only people who would willingly take on such a burden are precisely those possessed with a fascistic desire to remake the world in their own image with no regards on the consequences for others. This is not to draw a straight line from Weber's ideal-typical analysis of charismatic leadership to totalitarianism, but to suggest, in Pedro T. Magalhães's words, a "contingent affinity" between the two.[90] My concern is that too great of a focus on the singular responsibility of charismatic leaders limits political action to strongmen or neo-fascistic movements.[91] If the work of politics can only be undertaken by superhuman creatures able to bear infinite burdens, then there is little reason for most citizens to remain engaged in politics.[92]

Anticipatory responsibility, thus, requires more than heroic politicians, or itinerant philosophers, who feel personally called to stand and take responsibility for the world. While many

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[89] According to Lawrence A. Scaff, Weber attempted to ground his conception of charismatic leadership in terms of democratic authority, but overlooked the dangers of granting the political leader so much power. For Scaff, "The oversight was a direct result of his belief that for the present greater dangers were presented by bureaucracy than by charismatic authority." Lawrence A. Scaff, "Max Weber's Politics and Political Education," *The American Political Science Review* 67, no. 1 (1973): 139.

[90] Pedro T. Magalhães, "A Contingent Affinity: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and the Challenge of Modern Politics," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77, no. 2 (2016). Mommsen argues that while fascism is incompatible with Weber's account of responsibility, "his theory of plebiscitary leadership democracy was susceptible to reinterpretation in an authoritarian sense." *Max Weber and German Politics*, 410. Additionally, Roger Eatwall offers a sophisticated study of inter-war European fascism to test the applicability of Weber's concept to describe such leaders. He argues that charismatic mass mobilization was not prevalent, but that charismatic leadership could be used to helpfully describe three other aspects: *coterie-charisma*, the appeal of the leader to a select group of elites; *centripetal charisma*, the leader's use of broad and abstract appeals to gain broad support; and *cultic charisma*, the attempt to cast the leader in almost religious terms. Roger Eatwell, "The Concept and Theory of Charismatic Leadership," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 2 (2006).

[91] It is hard not to hear President Trump's assertion of "I alone can fix it" as the dangerous implications of Weber's heroic conception of the charismatic leader. The New York Times, "Transcript: Donald Trump at the G.O.P. Convention," https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/trump-transcript-rnc-address.html. Arendt herself contends that totalitarian movements require "atomized, isolated individuals" who "without any other social ties to family, friends, comrades, or even mere acquaintances, derive [their] sense of having a place in the world only from [their] belonging to a movement." *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 323-324.

[92] Weber nearly intimates as much, giving a warning to those who do not have the "maturity" for politics: They did not really, truly, and objectively have the vocation for politics in its innermost meaning that they had imagined themselves to have. They would have done better to cultivate neighborly contacts with other people, individually, in a simple and straightforward way, and apart from that, to go about their daily work without any fuss." Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 93.

scholars have attempted to rehabilitate aspects of Weber's thought to emphasize the possibility of public accountability, such as the people's gaze[93] or a "community of shared fate,"[94] I argue that the conception of world, as developed by Nietzsche and Arendt, as perspectival and pluralistic expands and pluralizes the conception of responsible leadership. To temper both the desire of citizens to abdicate responsibility and of leaders to exercise power to their own ends, the political community itself must be conceived of as the bearer of anticipatory responsibility. Only such a collective subject can responsibly authorize the use of coercive force and thus take responsibility for the world.

As I argued in the previous chapter, anticipatory responsibility begins with the premise that human beings are responsible for the values that render world meaningful. Nietzsche proclamation of the death of God offers a call for humanity to take up again its responsibility for its dwelling place rather than displace it towards God or a universal moral law. Modern democratic politics, which claim that state violence is authorized by the people, only intensifies this dilemma of responsibility. Writing of Arendt, Sofia Näsström describes the burdens of such a state:

> With the lack of an external limitation on political affairs comes not only the sensation of absolute freedom but absolute responsibility. Human beings must now take responsibility for the absence of a higher order in political affairs. The problem is that the absence of God as guarantor of right is enormous in its omnipotence, and by taking its place human beings are put in a most inhuman condition. They find themselves in a condition of absolute or unlimited responsibility. The result is that from this moment on there is no way to be a bystander in politics, for whether human beings act or remain passive is in the end irrelevant. They are still responsible for its outcome.[95]

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[93] See: Green, Jeffrey Edward, "Max Weber and the Reinvention of Popular Power," *Max Weber Studies* 8, no. 2 (2008). Green specifically argues that the people's gaze holds the leader accountable through a disciplinary function: "The people would render politicians in mass democracy *responsible* – not by holding their decisions accountable to the People's own preferences and opinions about how issues should be resolved – but by subjecting leaders to an unprecedented level of surveillance such that it would be impossible for the leaders to disclaim their actions and deny complicity in events in which they were involved" (212).

[94] Vázquez-Arroyo argues that this concept can be deployed against Weber's own nationalist understanding as "the idea of the bounded space where the political actor – the bearer of political responsibility – acts." Such a space intertwines the fate of the actor with the larger population and can be leveraged towards a more democratic account of political responsibility. *Political Responsibility*, 237.

[95] Sofia Näsström, "The Right to Have Rights: Democratic, Not Political," *Political Theory* 42, no. 5 (2014): 557.

That is, the liberation of a world beyond good an evil promised by Nietzsche – "We deny God; in denying God, we deny accountability [*Verantwortlichkeit*]: only by doing *that* do we redeem the world" (*TI*: "Errors," 8) – may be a liberation from moral accountability and otherworldly moral standards, but it entails a corresponding political responsibility. In accepting that humans alone "first created meanings for things, a human meaning" (*TSZ*: "Thousand and One Goals"), human beings cannot escape responsibility for the world that they create.[96]

Though the world is created and shaped by human animals working to reform and reinterpret the natural and social forces in which they find themselves, this creation should not be understood as solely the effort and product of individuals. As Zarathustra describes, "First peoples were creators and only later individuals; indeed, the individual himself is still the youngest creation" (*TSZ*: "Thousand and One Goals"). The process of value creation and transformation described in the previous chapter cannot be achieved by solely individual efforts, but only through communal processes. The structure of the world emerges out of communal action, rather than individual intentional action; therefore, the responsibility for that world must be communally borne. Not only would it be impossible for one person to generate sufficient power to restructure of the world, doing so would eliminate the world's perspectival character, in so doing destroying its quality as a world.

The intersubjective constitution of the world is evident in Arendt's theorizing of world. She writes, "Wherever people come together, the world thrusts itself between them, and it is in this in-between space that all human affairs are conducted."[97] A world can only exist when there are individuals in common; it cannot be created individually. Because of this, the world "always shows

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[96] Hence Raffoul writes of Nietzsche: "this new sense of responsibility actually emerges *out of* the destruction of accountability: There is on the one hand the proclamation of the complete unaccountability of all things, since there is no author, agent, or cause; but paradoxically, it is this very agentless and authorless existence that responsibilizes us, putting us in the position of having to take over such groundlessness *in an extra-moral sense*." Raffoul, *Origins of Responsibility*, 119.
[97] Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," 106.

and reveals itself to him from only one perspective," such that the world's reality is "something that is shared by many people, lies between them, separates and links them, showing itself differently to each and comprehensible only to the extent that many people can talk *about* it and exchange their opinions and perspectives with one another, over against one another."[98] While constituted by individuals in common, it retains a perspectival character, appearing to individuals differently based on their position within it. Taking responsibility for the world must negotiate this plurality to preserve the world as a space for freedom and distinction.

Given the communal and plural constitution of the world, anticipatory responsibility requires a communal project; it cannot be borne by liberal individuals, solitary philosophers, or political leaders alone. Rather, anticipatory responsibility involves concerted communal action to shape and reshape social, economic, and political structures. It is distinct from collective guilt: a responsibility derived from belonging to and participating in the life of the community rather than a guilt for one's independent action.[99] As Arendt writes, "we are always held responsible for the sins of our fathers as we reap the rewards of their merits; but we are of course not guilty of their misdeeds, either morally or legally, nor can we ascribe their deeds to our own merits."[100] Theorizing anticipatory responsibility communally both offers pragmatic benefits, as structures can only be remade through collective action, and tempers the anti-democratic temptations of this Nietzschean vision.

Just as reshaping the structure of the world requires the mobilizing the use of coercive power, this power is most effectively mobilized by action in concert. The globalized scale of social

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[98] *Ibid.*, 128. See also: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 57-58.
[99] See: Arendt, "Collective Responsibility," 149.
[100] *Ibid.*, 150. Young's gloss is helpful: "guilt should be attributed to persons who commit crimes or wrongs, or directly contribute by their actions to crimes or wrongs. Being responsible, but not guilty, is a designation that belongs to persons whose active or passive support for governments, institutions, and practices enables culprits to commit crimes and wrongs." *Responsibility for Justice*, 91-912.

structures, the inherent conservativism of institutions, and entrenched interests within the status quo

make constitute significant impediments to structural change which can only be effectively

overcome through mass mobilization Additionally, "most of us are objectively constrained by the

rules, norms, and material effects of structural processes when we try to act alone," Young writes.

Therefore, "these processes can be altered only if many actors from diverse positions within the

social structures work together to intervene in them to try to produce other outcomes."[101] Taking

anticipatory responsibility by oneself alone is likely to produce the same nausea and frustration that

led Zarathustra to withdraw from the political world. Only exercising power in common and

building institutions that outlast individual actions can relieve this frustration and create lasting

political change.

To this end, anticipatory responsibility requires expanding and pluralizing spaces of political

action and engagement. In addition to building a broader base of power, this means bringing into

focus marginalized perspectives that can expose unseen or disavowed injustices in the structure of

the world. Following Myers, "Caring for the world as a potential intermediary means fostering

practices and building institutions that provide as many citizens as possible with meaningful

opportunities to articulate their innumerable perspectives in the presence of one another and to

influence the conditions under which they live."[102] In this vein, anticipatory responsibility is an

essentially democratic project, requiring the mobilization of a community of diverse perspectives to

negotiate these differences and articulate shared issues of concern. In addition to requiring

persuasion, deliberation, coordination, and compromise to mobilize collective action, whatever

action is taken, as with all uses of power, will inevitably create winners and losers. Negotiating these

differential outcomes, and ensuring that those who bear costs or are denied benefits are not being

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[101] Young, *Responsibility for Justice*, 111.
[102] Myers, *Worldly Ethics*, 125.

systematically deprived of the possibility to live flourishing lives, will also require continual

democratic engagement.

In contrast to current welfare policy's administrative response to poverty, anticipatory

responsibility must involve active engagement and participation of the poor themselves. Taking

responsibility for the world is not only responding to material injustices, but building and

maintaining institutional spaces where diverse perspectives among individuals and communities can

come together, empower themselves, and collectively determine their fates. Failing to incorporate

the voices and perspectives of those being affected by political action is a hubristic use of power that

fails to meet the standards set by an ethics of responsibility; democratic participation and

deliberation makes the consequences of action legible for which one is taking responsibility. Myers,

therefore, argues that caring for the world requires cultivating and maintaining spaces of democratic

participation and contestation.[103] This is not a call for decentralization, or replacing state action with

private charity or market solutions, but an argument for reforming state bureaucracies and apparatus

that actively facilitate meaningful citizen participation.[104] Recent experiments with and scholarship

on "Participatory Budgeting," as popularized in Brazil, offer one potential means of ensuring that

anticipatory responsibility is democratically discharged. These practices empower citizens to

deliberate and decide on the distribution of public funds allocated for their neighborhood or region.

Such practices aim to integrate all members of the community, including those left out of traditional

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[103] *Ibid.*, 130-131.

[104] Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright's conception of "empowered deliberative democracy" (EDD), which draws on empirical attempts at reforming participatory governance in a variety of contexts, such as Chicago policing and Brazil's participatory budgeting, is valuable here. For Fung and Wright, EDD has three principles: "(1) a focus on specific, tangible problems, (2) involvement of ordinary people affected by these problems and officials close to them, and (3) the deliberative development of solutions to these problems." Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, "Deepening Democracy: Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance," *Politics & Society* 29, no. 1 (2001): 17. It is also important to note that while this often requires devolution, or moving from a central, national political bodies to local ones, "EDD reforms attempt to remake official institutions along these principles. This formal route potentially harnesses the power and resources of the state to deliberation and popular participation and thus to make these practices more durable and widely accessible" (23).

forms of political participation, by giving the community real decision-making authority over budget decisions instead of a mere advisory role.[105]

Taking anticipatory responsibility for the world cannot and should not eliminate the plurality of contending values and interests which constitute any community, but seeks to negotiate this pluralism and authorize coercive force responsibly. Involving greater numbers of people and a multiplicity of perspectives will not only better disclose the consequences for which the community must assume responsibility, but also better position the community to negotiate the inevitable differential distribution of resources, power, and prestige that will follow. Greater inclusion should spur both greater caution on the use of coercion and compromises in both means and ends with provisions to balance inevitable losses.[106] Mobilizing the entire community will create immanent criteria for judgment, as being able to persuade and inspire collective action will require seeing the world from a multiplicity of perspectives, while simultaneously building at least temporary consensus.[107] This means that anticipatory responsibility will always be a provisional project, responding to specific political predicaments with flexible and revisable action.

Anticipatory responsibility thus encounters what has been called the "paradox of politics:" it frames taking responsibility as concerted collective action to build, maintain, and reform democratic institutions; yet, collectivize mobilization requires the existence of the same democratic institutions

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[105] For a thorough analysis of the experience, results, and effectiveness of participatory budgeting (PB) initiatives in Brazil see: Yves Cabannes, "Participaotory Budgeting: A Significant Contribution to Participatory Democracy," *Environment&Urbanization* 16, no. 1 (2004). Carole Pateman offers 4 conclusions from her survey of the empirical evidence: "First, PB has redistributed recourses to poor areas of Porto Algre, a notable achievement in a country as unequal as Brazil […] Second, the example of Porto Alegre shows that when citizens see a connection between participation and outcomes they are more likely to take part. Third, PB also shows that participants do not look narrowly to their own neighborhoods and regions but consider the good for the city as a whole. Fourth, two decades of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre shows that it and, therefore, democratization is feasible." Carole Pateman, "Apsa Presidential Address: Participatory Democracy Revisited," *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 1 (2012): 12.

[106] As Jane Mansbridge writes: "each balance of power creates a new underdog, each settlement a new group who would benefit from unsettling. Each settlement accordingly creates not only the necessary capacity for action but also the need to protect and facilitate in some way those who have lost." "Using Power\Fighting Power," 64.

[107] See: Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," 167-168,

and political spaces for which the community must take responsibility.[108] This reveals a more fundamental paradox that political action always occurs in time, in response to the structure of the political world as one finds it, rather than *ex nihilo* through some mythic act.[109] It is here that anticipatory responsibility's grounding in the ERS is valuable, as it embraces a paradoxical temporality as part of its call to responsibility rather than tries to resolve it. ERS offers a reminder that one's responsibility can never be fully discharged, but requires constant engagement with the world as the only place of human dwelling. It reminds communities that "no democracy ever reaches the point at which justice is simply done,"[110] but that past predicaments are never settled once and for all and future challenges will always emerge from past ones.

This paradox – that responsibility for the world demands political engagement, but political engagement is only possible if the structure of the world allows it – entails that the diagnostic and genealogical aspects of anticipatory responsibility are intrinsically linked to its futural and active dimensions. In many cases, the lived experience of injustice is not easily connected, cognitively or affectively, to existing structures of power. As Schiff argues: "Only when we can acknowledge and experience our connections to phenomena like structural injustice can we even begin to consider assuming responsibility for them. The language of political responsibility, however, presupposes such acknowledgement and experience without articulating either their conditions of possibility or the roots of their possible frustrations."[111] Additionally, an unjust social structure may not only limit

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[108] Connolly describes the paradox of politics in terms of foundations through a reading of Rousseau: "For a general will to be brought into being, effect (social spirit) would have to become cause, and cause (good laws) would have to become effect. The problem is how to establish either condition without the previous attainment of the other upon which it depends." *Ethos of Pluralization*, 138. Honig similarly glosses: "In order for there to be a people well-formed enough for good law-making, there must be good law for how else will the people be well-formed? The problem is: where would that good law come from absent an already well-formed, virtuous people?" Bonnie Honig, "Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory," *The American Political Science Review* 101, no. 1 (2007): 3.

[109] See: Honig, "Between Decision and Deliberation," 6-8.

[110] Mansbridge, "Using Power\Fighting Power," 64.

[111] Schiff, *Burdens of Political Responsibility*, 34.

political participation but can entirely isolated from democratic processes. In such cases, standard forms of political participation will be inadequate to bring about structural reform.

For example, the existing funding structure for Chicago Public Schools (CPS) allocates funding through property taxes and links funding to school enrollment. This system, combined with state-level cuts to education, has created a budget crisis resulting in a shortened school year, staff layoffs, and school closings, all of which have disproportionately affected poor and minority neighborhoods. Responding to this injustice requires connecting the experience of school closings, loss of special education and arts programs, and shorter school years to city and state level budgeting decisions and priorities. Even more problematic is the fact that the Chicago Board of Education, which oversees CPS's administration and financing is not elected but appointed by the mayor, insulating it from direct forms of political participation.[112]

Taking responsibility involves a genealogical project of accounting for the existing structure of worldly power and the injustices it generates. This diagnostic practice is necessary to identify potential avenues for political action, strategic foci for advocacy, and locations where traditional political strategies may be inadequate. Given inequalities in political information, resources, and networks, political education and leadership are necessary components of anticipatory responsibility. More political participation cannot be regarded as a panacea in itself. Responsible political action in anticipation of a world of human flourishing cannot dispense with strategic decision making and incremental reform. No political ethic can fully resolve the paradox of politics; instead responsible and mature political action must find productive interventions into this paradox.

In this vein, anticipatory responsibility is a constant solicitude to the world, which animates political engagement. This generates another important line of engagement with Satkunanandan's

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[112] Chicago Board of Education, "About," http://www.cpsboe.org/about. I am indebted to Arturo Chang Quiroz for suggesting this example.

account of the constitutive responsibility "to always give my attention to the world." "This responsibility," she continues cannot "be specified in advanced, reckoned up, and discharged. My humanity simply demands that I must always respond to the ever-unfolding world and it provides no script for my responses."[113] The world, and its future, is constantly calling for individuals and political communities to respond, insisting that the work of politics is never done.

Yet, at the same time, this eternally present call to respond should not be interpreted as an infinite, metaphysical responsibility. As Arendt warns, this could generate an "intolerable situation of global responsibility" in which "the solidarity of mankind may well turn out to be an unbearable burden" that generates "political apathy, isolationist nationalism, or desperate rebellion."[114] Satkunanandan herself cautions that the incalculable nature of constitutive or anticipatory responsibility must always be paired with an attentiveness to specific courses of action, intention, and strategies.[115] Similarly, Vázquez-Arroyo insists that "political responsibility, to be sure, cannot be just answerability," but is always mediated by particular structures of power that constitute both the situation to which one must respond and the possible responses available to a political agent.[116] Like Arendt, he maintains that political responsibility is only meaningful within the contours of a constituted political community and established political space.[117] Anticipatory responsibility, as a political response to the world, always answers to a particular political problematic rather than an unfathomable ontological call. Not only is the world politically constituted, but the demands the world makes upon us are always politically mediated.

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[113] Satkunanandan, *Extraordinary Responsibility*, 90.
[114] Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 83.
[115] Satkunanandan, *Extraordinary responsibility*, 191.
[116] Vázquez-Arroyo, *Political Responsibility*, 137.
[117] *Ibid.*, 104. On Arendt, see: "Collective Responsibility" 149.

Once again anticipatory responsibility is situated between the poles of particularity and universality. Focusing exclusively on the former can justify disavowals of responsibility and obscure the broader constitution of the political world in which particular political communities participate. Focusing exclusively on the latter provides too vague a conception of responsibility to encourage meaningful political action. The reminder that political resolutions are not final or absolute, that every political settlement has remainders that may require renegotiation or revision, that every political action has unforeseen consequences, and that every decision will cause some individuals or groups to incur losses while others gain benefits offers a sobering riposte to the aspirational conception of anticipatory responsibility. It should also challenge a parochial conception of political responsibility that draws sharp demarcations around one's own political community. Recalling both that all polities are fragilely constituted and that the social, economic, and political structures which constitute the world extend beyond national boundaries, anticipatory responsibility must expand and pluralize the connections that constitute the vicarious responsibility Arendt describes.[118] Yet at the same time, the world is only ever experienced in concrete political contexts, structured by relationships of power, and particular dilemmas demanding response.

VI-The Challenge of Anticipatory Responsibility

The four dimensions of anticipatory responsibility – its orientation in the temporality of ERS, its grounding in the structure of the political world, its execution through the building and use of political power, and its necessity to be borne collectively and politically – mutually reinforce and build upon each other. Anticipatory responsibility's expanded temporal horizon, which sees past and future inextricably bound together and demands action on behalf of the future flourishing of humanity, requires moving the object of responsibility beyond the self. One cannot take

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[118] Young critiques Arendt's conception of political responsibility on this point. See: *Responsibility for Justice*, 78-79.

responsibility for the future by accounting for one's deeds or even by taking responsibility for one's offspring or future generations. Future human flourishing can only be facilitated by concerted action on behalf of the structures of the political world which both predate and outlast our own lives yet will enduringly shape the possibilities of future individuals and communities to determine their own ends. Building, reforming, and rebuilding institutions that are massively distributed in time and space requires building, maintaining, and exercising political power, including but not limited to harnessing the coercive power of the modern states. For such power to be used responsibly, and for this responsibility to not become an overwhelming burden, it requires collective mobilization and actively engaged democratic citizens. Yet, turning almost full circle, an active citizenry is only possible if the political world is structured in such ways that enable collective deliberation and decision, generation of power in common, and critical engagement.

These aspects of anticipatory responsibility all pull individuals outside of themselves, expanding their temporal, spatial, and political connections with others and pushing them towards the world of political engagement. One cannot take responsibility by oneself; being responsible is not a function of ethical self-reflection or self-care, though they may be necessary practices. Nor is anticipatory responsibility discharged through individual relationships with others, though it would surely animate such moral behavior. Instead, anticipatory responsibility always seeks to foreground the political world: its historicity and tenacity; its complex web of power relations, economic structures, and social institutions; its diverse perspectives and incommensurable values; and its real stakes in determining how it is that humans should live and order their collective lives. It offers a constant reminder that political conflict will eternally recur and that vigilance over the use of power, the distribution of material resources, and the possibilities of critique and advocacy will always be necessary. To be responsible, in sum, is to be engaged in the political world, recognizing that one will always be complicit in suffering and that one is called to account for it by working, in whatever

ways one can, to make the world both a more hospitable and empowering dwelling place for

humanity.

<center>**Conclusion:**
The Responsibility of Politics</center>

I-Personal and Political Responsibility: Agonistic Positions

This study has defended three primary arguments. First, responsibility should be understood as a political concept, rather than a philosophical concept. That is, while competing interpretations of the meaning of responsibility exist, partisans in political contests invoke particular interpretations to settle disputes about how life in common should be ordered and structured. Therefore, scholars of responsibility should study the different uses and interpretations of "responsibility," their operation in different political discourses and theoretical projects, and the conceptions of politics they imagine.

Second, moralistic narratives of personal responsibility not only obscure structural injustice and encourage disavowing one's broader political responsibilities, they also intensify resentment and ethical condemnation against "irresponsible" individuals and communities, often targeting the already vulnerable and suffering. When responsibility is defined in essentially individualistic terms, individuals are cast as solely accountable for their life-outcomes, precluding political action to remake unjust social, economic, and political structures and encouraging victim-blaming and scapegoating.

Third, through both a reconstruction of Friedrich Nietzsche's critique and revaluation of responsibility as well as an engagement with contemporary theorists of political responsibility, I advance an alternative imagining of responsibility: anticipatory responsibility. Oriented towards the conditions of future human flourishing, anticipatory responsibility shifts the object of responsibility from an individual's actions to the structure of the world – the network of ecological, material, ideational, social, and economic relations that constitute the conditions of possible human life, action, and meaning. Rather than something to be ascribed analogous to moral blame, legal liability,

or financial debt, anticipatory responsibility is *taken* by individuals and political communities claiming responsibility for a world that has preceded and will outlast them. Such a conception of responsibility, I contend, is better suited to orienting and motivating communal political action aimed at generating sufficient power to transform unjust structures.

Should anticipatory responsibility replace personal responsibility as the dominant way to make sense of the political world, distribute praise and blame, and organize obligations? Given my argument that narratives of personal responsibility generate political pathologies and are inadequate when responding to the complexity and uncertainty of political life, it is reasonable to draw this conclusion. However, both my account of essentially contested political concepts and my reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism question the viability of such a move. Rather than insisting that anticipatory responsibility is *the* correct interpretation of responsibility, I argue that personal responsibility and anticipatory responsibility should be treated as agonistic positions. These competing interpretations not only offer different responses to political dilemmas, but also bring into focus psychological drives, metaphysical commitments, and moral values that underlying political predicaments, through this conflict.

As Chapter 1 argued, to settle, or decontest, the meaning of a political concept is to make a claim about how the political world is and should be structured. Different interpretations of political concepts, therefore, contain different political imaginaries, and, as shown in the second chapter, enable certain political options while rendering others as illegitimate. When the contestability of a political concept is disavowed, the political world it imagines is viewed as natural, universal, and inevitable. In contrast, Nietzsche's genealogical critique of moral values unsettles their givenness, making it possible to see the world through a variety of contingent, experimental, and contending perspectives. Nietzsche's agonism treats these conflicting interpretations of and perspectives of the world as not only inherent to the human condition, but also as generative of new values and

projects. For Nietzsche, value conflict is not to be settled by imposing transcendental finality, but is to be encouraged as one of human flourishing's conditions of possibility. As agonistic positions, personal and anticipatory responsibility challenge and correct each other, but do not seek a rational synthesis or a final answer. Instead, they offer the reminder that responsibility, one's capacity to answer to the dilemmas and predicaments of political life, can never be easily settled, but requires continual renegotiation.[1]

As agonistic positions, these contending interpretations of responsibility imagine different forms of politics. Personal responsibility responds to the dilemmas of existence and political life by identifying accountable agents to whom blame, liability, or debt can be ascribed. It organizes the uncertainty and complexity of the world into distinct causal, legal, or moral paths and a clear linear time-sequence. It relieves the existential anxiety generated by seemingly undeserved suffering or unexplainable events by providing a reason, and therefore meaning, for what has happened. It depicts the political world as one consisting of atomistic individuals fully in charge of their own destinies, freely interacting with each other within an empty space.

In contrast, anticipatory responsibility does not attempt to eliminate uncertainty and complexity, but accepts hem as constitutive of politics. Instead, it looks forward towards the actions to be taken that ensure the political world, though imperfect and always changing, is a hospitable dwelling that facilitates flourishing. It responds to suffering by examining and critiquing the ways that social, economic, and political structures enable and constrain human action, and generate differentiated life possibilities based on location within the system. It calls upon political communities to recognize their complicity in the unjust structure of the world and to generate

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[1] I am indebted to conversations with Jade L. Schiff on thinking about the differences and relationships between personal and political responsibility that inform this section.

collective power so as to bring new or reformed structures into being, while remaining cognizant of the inevitability that such projects will generate their own remainders and unintended consequences.

In some cases, responding to the world by ascribing personal responsibility can be appropriate. Ordinary political, legal, and social practices would be impossible without some shared basic beliefs that individuals can are responsible. When individuals knowingly and intentionally cause harm to others, or do so through negligent disregard for the consequences of their actions, they should be held to account for their behavior. My study of the politics of responsibility demonstrates, however, that such an ascription is both political decision that orders the world in a particular way and is only possible because of the historically contingent development of the idea of a self-responsible person. In reconstructing anticipatory responsibility as a contending interpretation, I have shown that ascriptions of individual responsibility exhaust neither the totality of one's responsibilities nor the totality of responsibility's meaning. Such myopia transforms the political world into one of individual ethical behavior. Anticipatory responsibility does not displace all individual culpability to impersonal structures, but recognizes that political life demands a responsibility for ensuring that the political world is structured to facilitate human flourishing.

While it might be tempting to distinguish personal and anticipatory responsibility as two different forms of responsibility appropriate to different domains of human life – personal responsibility is the appropriate form of responsible to making interpersonal, moral, and legal judgements and anticipatory responsibility is appropriate for the world of politics – an agonistic approach resists such categorization. Such a division settles responsibility's contestable meaning by dividing it into two separate concepts. This depoliticizes responsibility, treating its disputed meaning as a resolving a category mistake through conceptual clarification. Doing so also draws stark divisions between the domains of ethics, law, economics, and politics. Such boundary policing obscures the interaction of different types of structures and institutions and the various networks

within which individuals and communities are embedded. It also disavows the political history of the concept, obscuring what Nietzsche describes as the generations long process of breeding a self-responsible individual.

Instead, the conflicting responses to political dilemmas envisioned by personal and anticipatory responsibility should be held together to generate a creative tension. This tension can illuminate different aspects of the political world and reveal the assumptions underlying dominant political narratives, ideological tropes, and commonsense moral intuitions. Doing so not only heightens one's understanding of the complexity and irreducible value conflict constitutive of political life, but can further encourage more generous and generative responses to dilemmas. For example, in offering conflicting framings of poverty and welfare politics, personal and anticipatory responsibility bring to the fore different considerations for political analysis and policy-making. The former emphasizes the behavior and decision-making of individuals abstracted from socio-economic context, while the latter subsumes such concerns within massively distributed social structures. In addition to bringing different aspects of the political world into sharper relief through illustrative contrasts, these conflicts further reveal the political values and desires behind different invocations of responsibility. They raise new and interesting questions: what psychological and political work is being accomplished by reducing poverty to individual decision-making? What policy responses are rendered unthinkable by dominant framings of poverty and welfare? What resentments and attachments may be mobilized, even unintentionally, by alternative narratives of responsibility?

Inhabiting these contending perspectives, embracing Nietzsche's experimental epistemology of brief habits, incites critical self-reflection on one's own unacknowledged assumptions and drives. Attending to this political contestation – not only over specific policy responses, but also over fundamental conceptions of politics itself –prepares political theorists and actors for the constant solicitude that politics demands. It also tempers the false belief that political victories mean that

political conflict will end or political advocacy is no longer needed; it eases the temptation to impose

one's own perspective as a singular definitive settlement of political dilemmas. This practice, in many

ways analogous to what Honig following Rancière calls "working the interval," refuses to definitively

decide between personal and anticipatory responsibility.[2] Rather, in moving back and forth across

them encourages more imaginative and flexible responses to political dilemmas, envisioning a world

of neither atomistic self-responsible individuals nor massive impersonal structures.

Yet, these contending interpretations should not be treated as mutually exclusive or purely

antagonistic; rather, as agonistic positions they can mutually support each other. Taking anticipatory

responsibility, not only requires that individuals take personal responsibility for their own

participation in unjust social structures, but transforming such structures may also require holding

individuals wielding significant power to block such reform, including politicians, corporations, and

nations, personally accountable for their failure or obstinance. A city mayor that deliberately blocks

reforms to public school funding or a corporation that willfully perpetrates unjust labor practices

should each be held personally accountable as part of political action to take anticipatory

responsibility. Conversely, the goal of anticipatory responsibility is to ensure that the world is

structured in ways that enable flourishing lives. As discussed in Chapter 3, being able to determine

one's own meaning, and thus to take responsibility for one's life, is a crucial component of human

flourishing. Taking anticipatory responsibility, therefore, is taking responsibility for personal

responsibility's conditions of possibility.

Thus, rather than replacing personal responsibility, my defense of anticipatory responsibility

should be seen as working to generate contestation over the meaning of responsibility.[3] Not only is

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[2] Honig, "Antigone's Lament," 21-23.

[3] Similarly, this complicates Satkunanandan's account of a conversion from calculable to incalculable responsibility. See: Satkunanandan, *Extraordinary Responsibility*, 77-91. While I agree that the move from personal to anticipatory responsibility requires a fundamental shift in worldview, I am not convinced that personal responsibility should be left

anticipatory responsibility better suited to respond to the dilemmas of political life, but it also

provides its own immanent justifications for adopting multiple provisional perspectives. Whereas

ascriptions of moral responsibility order the world by imposing a single causal narrative and settling

questions by identifying *the* responsible agent, anticipatory responsibility grants that no final

settlement of responsibility is possible. Instead, a plurality of tentative and revisable perspectives is

necessary to respond the world. Therefore, while a valuable supplement to existing conceptions of

responsibility, anticipatory responsibility should not be interpreted as giving final and definitive

answers to political dilemmas.

This returns us to the political dilemma with which this study began: the threat of global

climate change. As was suggested, climate change calls into question many of the assumptions

underlying intuitive conceptions of personal responsibility. The challenges to formulate an effective

political response further suggest the inadequacy of our political commonsense. In what remains, I

examine the dilemma of climate change through the lenses of both personal and anticipatory

responsibility. This analysis both adds greater specificity to the political stakes and purchase of

anticipatory responsibility and demonstrates the value of framing them as agonistic positions.

II-Global Climate Change as a Dilemma of Responsibility

That the challenge of global climate change generates questions of responsibility has been

well documented in both the scholarly literature and international agreements. The 1992 United

Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) affirmed not only that human

activity is responsible for the production and concentration of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere,

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behind entirely. She herself complicates this claim, suggesting that the problem isn't moral calculations or rules per se, but the particular way these forms of thinking of come to dominate late-modern political imagination. What is required, she argues, is an appropriate attentiveness to the sway of calculative reasoning (191). This places her position closer to what I am defending here, but still suggests that incalculable responsibility is ontological prior to and constitutive of other forms of inauthentic responsibility, rather than treating them as different interpretations of responsibility or responses to the world.

but that "the largest share of historical and current global emissions of greenhouse gases has originated in developed countries." Therefore, the convention held "that the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and their social and economic conditions."[4] The idea of "common but differentiated responsibilities" was re-affirmed in the 1996 Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate,[5] and the 2015 Paris Agreement.[6]

This language already demonstrates the complicated nature of assessing responsibility for climate change, as it appears to simultaneously invoke two different, and opposed, criteria. "Common" responsibility implies a shared responsibility for historical greenhouse gas emissions, and envisions a global collective subject obliged to respond to the threat of climate change. However, these responsibilities are also "differentiated" reflecting the historical reality of vastly divergent emissions trends, and differentiated capabilities to mitigate or adapt to climate change in the present. The former relies on an egalitarian conception of justice, while the second responds to distributive concerns. Uniting these two principles has proven difficult, as can be seen by both voluminous scholarly debate and the difficulty of building an effective international climate regime.[7]

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[4] UNFCC United Nations Framework Convention on Cliamte Change, "United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change," (1992), 2. For a basic overview of "common but differentiated responsibilities," see: Steve Vanderheiden, "Common but Differentiated Responsibility," in *Essential Concepts of Global Environmental Governance*, ed. Jean-Frédéric Morin and Amandine Orsini (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[5] This group further elaborated the nature of "common but differentiated responsibilities," as follows: "Different obligations may be appropriate for different sets of countries, owing to their different contributions to a problem, different capacities and priorities, and/or different circumstances (for example, economic structures, geography, climate, resource bases, starting points)." UNFCC United Nations Framework Convention on Cliamte Change, "Possible Features of a Protocol or Another Legal Instrument," (Geneva1996), 12.

[6] The Paris agreement listed it as one of its "guiding principles: "including the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances." "Paris Agreement," (Paris2015), 1.

[7] The United States, for example, strongly criticized this principle during the debates over the UNFCCC in 1992, contending in a written statement that while acknowledging "the special leadership role of the developed countries," the United States rejected "any recognition or acceptance by the United States of any international obligations or liabilities,

As "common" and "differentiated" apply to both retrospective ascriptions of responsibility as well

as prospective obligations, the combined phrase creates further confusion as to the relationship

between historical responsibility and political obligation.

A diverse scholarly literature has taken up these challenges in earnest, attempting to both

resolve theoretical difficulties and articulate ethically sound mechanisms to distribute responsibility.

These involve attempts to synthesize retrospective and prospective responsibilities, and balance the

need for a robust and global commitment to respond to global warming and the concerns of

distributive justice and development economics. However, many of these theories at least implicitly

rely on personalized framings of responsibility. Though often applied to states, or groups of states,

they are treated as corporate persons, and responsibility is treated as analogous to moral guilt, legal

liability, or financial debt. Though intuitive, these framings generate both theoretical and political

challenges to mobilizing concerted action, necessitating alternative interpretations of responsibility.

One of the most common framings that follows this logic is the conception of "ecological,"

and more specifically "carbon," "debt:" the idea that wealthy, industrialized countries have racked

up a debt by exploiting carbon intensive fossil fuels from the industrial revolution onward. This

development places these countries in better position to adapt to climate change, insulating them

from the direst consequences, while developing countries face increasing international pressure to

forgo fossil fuels for their own economic development.[8] This framing has been invoked in scientific

studies,[9] popular political discourse,[10] and the United Nations' 2007/2008 Human Development

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or any diminution in the responsibilities of developing countries." United Nations, "Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development," (Rio de Janeiro1992), 22.

[8] For an overview, see: Andrew Simms, *Ecological Debt: Global Warming and the Wealth of Nations*, Second edition ed. (New York: Pluto Press, 2009).

[9] For example, H. Damon Matthews has given an analysis of the 250 billon tons of carbon dioxide constituting the "carbon debt," finding that large percentages are held by developed countries. H. Damon Matthews, "Quantifying Historical Carbon and Climate Debts among Nations," *Nature Climate Change* 6 (2016).

[10] Naomi Klein, for example, discusses in *Rolling Stone* how "carbon debt" was invoked by activists at the 2009 United Nations summit on climate change in Copenhagen. "Among the smartest and most promising — not to mention

Report.[11] This line of thinking also informs the "Polluter Pays Principle" in the environmental ethics literature: given that wealthy industrialized nations have generated a significant proportion of the historical greenhouse gas emissions, they should bear a corresponding proportion of the costs of mitigating or adapting to climate change.[12] This argument is further buttressed by findings that show a double inequity between responsibility and capability, but also vulnerability.[13] Those who are the least culpable, according to this model, for global warming have the least means to adapt to a changing climate and are therefore the most vulnerable its effect. The United States, European nations, and other developed states, have a greater carbon debt and are therefore *more* responsible for global climate change. They should be held to repay this debt through proportional contributions to global costs of mitigating and adapting to climate change. Recalling Chapter 3's discussion of the moral world-order, responsibility for climate change is treated in terms of moral guilt requiring restitution, or a financial debt to be balanced with appropriate exchange rates.

While the carbon debt argument ascribes a general responsibility for climate change to developed nations, other discussions of responsibility and climate change focus on demarcating and accounting for the specific mitigation and adaptation costs. Adopting economic, rather than moral, framings, such discussions focus on prospective responsibilities, identifying the costs and benefits of different responses to climate change. The ethical import of these discussions often turns on discussions of "discounting," or measuring how much the interests of current generations should be

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controversial — proposals is 'climate debt,'" she writes, "the idea that rich countries should pay reparations to poor countries for the climate crisis." Naomi Klein, "Climate Rage," *Rolling Stone*, December 12 2009, 39.

[11] The authors write: "As a global community, we are running up a large and unsustainable carbon debt, but the bulk of that debt has been accumulated by the world's richest countries. The challenge is to develop a global carbon budget that charts an equitable and sustainable course away from dangerous climate change." UNDP United Nations Development Programme, *Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 47.

[12] See for example: Henry Shue, "Global Environment and International Inequality," *International Affairs* 75, no. 3 (1999); Eric Neumayer, "In Defence of Historical Accountability for Greenhouse Gas Emissions," *Ecological Economics* 33 (2000).

[13] Hans-Martin Füssel, "How Inequitable Is the Global Distribution of Responsibility, Capability, and Vulnerability to Climate Change: A Comprehensive Indicator-Based Assessment," *Global Environmental Change* 20, no. 4 (2010).

discounted over those of future generations.[14] Adjudicating the discount rate is necessary to calibrate the extent of the current generation's responsibility: if the discount rate is too high, the costs of climate change will be unfairly placed on future generations, if it is too low, excessive burdens could be placed on the poor, while future wealthier generations inherit massive benefits.[15] Again responsibility is treated as something that can be quantified based on risk assessments and distributed efficiently. This line of economic thinking expands beyond immediate cost-benefit analyses, including determining discrete "stabilization wedges," which break down total emissions targets into equal portions matched to different mitigation strategies,[16] and treating greenhouse gas emissions as a property right.[17] These discourses further frame responsibility as a matter of economic calibration: matching an individual's or state's responsibility carbon responsibility to a

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[14] Given the opportunity costs of expending resources responding to climate change, as opposed to other investment opportunities, and the likelihood that future generations will have higher standards of living given economic growth, setting the discount rate is crucial to prevent deferring the costs of climate change to future generations. For a thorough and technical discussion, see: Nicholas Stern, "The Economics of Climate Change," in *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings*, ed. Stephen M. Gardiner, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [2008] 2010), 50-61.

[15] Caney's analysis of the relationship between different conceptions of the social discount rate and conceptions of intergenerational responsibility and justice offers the following conclusion: if pure time discounting is applied (which offers no distinction between current and future generations) there is no reason to delay action and pass on costs; if either opportunity cost or growth discounting are adopted, there is also little reason to pass on costs. Only if it is true that future generations will be wealthier than the current generation can some of the costs be pass on to them. Simon Caney, "Climate Change, Intergenerational Equity and the Social Discount Rate," *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 13, no. 4 (2014).

[16] See: Robert H. Socolow and Mary R. English, "Living Ethically in a Greenhouse," in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, ed. Denis G. Arnold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). This strategy suggests a pragmatic conception of future-oriented responsibility: "it seems most plausible," Socolow and English argue, "to be capable of taking responsibility for and planning for 'the rolling present,' […] our main responsibility to future generations is to provide the next one or two generations with the skills, resources, and opportunities they will need to cope with the problems we have left behind." Socolow and English, "Living ethically in a greenhouse," 190-191.

[17] Individuals, corporations, or states are granted particular emissions entitlements, along with sanctions and incentives for remaining within this limit. These discussions rely on an implicit conception of personal responsibility: one is responsible for one's carbon emissions and for not exceeding one's entitlement. The debate turns to determining exactly what the distribution should be. Some, such as Moellendorf, argue for an egalitarian distribution: "Every person shares in a common property right to the Earth's atmosphere […and] every person has an equal entitlement to emit CO_2." Moellendorf, "Common atmosphere ownership," 104. Others, such as Caney, argue that that emission rights should be distributed taking into account "different levels of needs between different people." Simon Caney, "Climate Change, Energy Rights, and Equality," ibid., 98. Caney argues that egalitarian distributions are "unfair on the needy and vulnerable" (97).

particular stabilization strategy or limiting it to a particular emissions entitlement, in ways strikingly

similar to Dworkin's means of distributing responsibility via a hypothetical insurance market.

Additional framings of responsibility draw from legal discourses, especially in discussions of

intergenerational justice to respond to objections based on ignorance or intent. Catriona McKinnon

argues that an analogy can be made to tort law to justify the responsibility in terms of corrective

justice, arguing that this analogy can "render liable agents who perform actions putting others at risk

before the risk materializes and, indeed, even if the risk never materializes."[18] That is, developed

nations are responsible for putting the rest of the world, and future generations, at risk, even if it was

done so unintentionally or indirectly. This entails a corresponding responsibility to make

contributions to corrective justice.[19] Steve Vanderheiden also draws on legal analogies to criminal

law to show that ignorance cannot excuse responsibility, because "actual intentions […] matter less

than reasonable expectations about possible consequences."[20] Despite uncertainty about the precise

effects of climate change, it cannot be justly used to prevent offenders from being held

accountable.[21] These analogies distribute responsibilities both to mitigate emissions and to

contribute to corrective justice for past emissions, based on a broader conception of liability

frequently used in courts of law.

Despite their diversity, these discussions of responsibility share common features with

personalized moral responsibility: past deeds and behavior are treated as the primary object of

responsibility, individual agents, from natural to corporate persons, constitute the subject of

responsibility, and responsibility is ultimately framed as holding the appropriate agent accountable

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[18] Catriona McKinnon, "Climate Change and Corrective Justice," *Jahrbuch für Recht und Ethik* 17, no. 2 (2009): 266.
[19] *Ibid.*, 269.
[20] Steve Vanderheiden, "Knowledge, Uncertainty, and Responsibility: Responding to Climate Change," *Public Affairs Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (2004): 152.
[21] *Ibid.*,155.

and demanding sufficient recompense. This relies on a conception of responsibility as something

that can be quantified and distributed like credit and debt, allowing for a final moral balance that

ultimately repays the carbon debt of industrialized countries. When framed in moral, economic, or

legalistic conceptions of responsibility, climate change becomes a "tragedy of the commons."

Responsibility is then treated as something that can be broken into quantifiable units and distributed

to specific agents as a means of internalizing the externalities of carbon emissions. This does not

question the underlying social and economic structures that sustain and encourage greenhouse gas

emissions; instead responding to climate change requires correctly calibrating a cost-benefit analysis.

These approaches encounter significant theoretical and political challenges, however. First, it

is difficult to correctly determine and assess the carbon debt of historical emissions. While the

general trend – wealthy industrialized nations bear most of the responsibility for the level of

greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere – is well established, significant model uncertainty remains

depending on the particular parameters used to model historical emissions.[22] Attribution becomes

even murkier when moving from general trends to particular individuals and behavior. Given the

complexities of the carbon cycle and the global climate system, which includes multiple feedback

loops, complex interaction between globally distributed emission sources and natural carbon sinks,

as well as long term additive effects of lingering concentrations of greenhouse gasses, it is immensely

difficult to determine an individual's specific responsibility for climate change.[23]

It is also unclear if citizens can be legitimately held accountable for their nations' emissions

histories, especially for emissions that preceded their life and over which they have had no say.

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[22] See: Den Elzen and Schaeffer, "Responsibility for Past and Future Global Warming."
[23] See Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 148-150. Kenneth Arrow and his co-authors also show the difficulties of precisely identifying the social discount rate in conditions of uncertainty, which characterize climate change. This entails that these decisions are always subject to judgment and not simply questions of correct identification. See K. Arrow and et. al., "Determining Benefits and Costs for Future Generations," *Science* 341, no. 6144 (2013).

Caney argues that attempts to ground "climate reparations" based on either a causal model or beneficiary model of responsibility ultimately fail to link responsibility over multiple generations.[24] Furthermore, Ludwig Beckman argues that it is important to take into account the quality of political institutions when ascribing collective responsibility to citizens for state-policies that encouraged greenhouse gas emissions.[25] Given inequalities in wealth, resource use, and political representation, individuals did not have equal ability to shape a state's emissions profile, making it difficult to ascribe collective responsibility. That is, not only do such ascriptions of responsibility hold individuals responsible for greenhouse gasses emitted before they were born, it also holds them responsible for actions not subject to democratic decision-making and public accountability. While claims of collective responsibility could, in principle, justify the former, the latter cannot be easily resolved.

Additionally, the complexity of climate change undermines moral intuitions about responsibilities for action going forward. Surveying dominant meta-ethical principles, Sinnott-Armstrong concludes that existing moral principles cannot ground individual obligations to live sustainably.[26] However, because "this case is controversial, emotional, peculiarly modern, and likely to be distorted by overgeneralization and partiality," relying on moral intuitions alone is unlikely to motivate effective action.[27] Similarly, Gardiner describes climate change as a "perfect moral storm," involving global distribution of effects, fragmented agency, intergenerational consequences, and

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[24] Simon Caney, "Environmental Degradation, Reparations, and the Moral Significance of History," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 37, no. 3 (2006). Caney argues that in addition to problems with blaming current generations for the actions of past generations, there are significant theoretical questions as to whether past generations can benefit current generations, given Parfit's "non-identity problem." Caney insists that this does not mean that history is morally irrelevant, but that responsibility cannot be ascribed in this way, and instead argues for focusing on the responsibility of current emitters, and capturing the claims of history by integrating an "ability to pay principle" (478).

[25] Ludvig Beckman, "Democray, National Responsibility and Climate Change Justice," *Democratization* 19, no. 5 (2012).

[26] Sinnott-Armstrong, "Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations."

[27] *Ibid.*, 303.

complex interactions between human action and non-human processes.[28] "Since climate change involves a complex convergence of problems, it is easy to engage in *manipulative or self-deceptive* behavior by applying one's attention selectively […] its complexity may turn out to be *perfectly convenient* for us, the current generation, and indeed for each successor generation as it comes to occupy our position."[29] Once again, attempting to apply commonsense conceptions of personal responsibility to complex structural harms, like global climate change, encourages disavowals and displacement of responsibility. Buck-passing strategies become particularly acute in the case of climate change, as individuals can make a reasonable case against being personally responsible for large concentrations of greenhouse gasses. The theoretical complexities required to connect individuals to climate change become reasons for skepticism and convenient excuses to delay action. Rather than encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their carbon debt, these discourses only make possible its further displacement.

Recent international negotiations over climate change bear this point out. Jonathan Pickering and Christian Barry contend that while theoretically defensible, climate debt arguments can generate resistance in international negotiations and risk "overemphasizing retrospective liability at the expense of future distributive concerns."[30] Todd Stern, the top climate negotiator from the United States at the Copenhagen conference demonstrates how the negative connotations associated with framing responsibility as debt can be strategically manipulated. While activists were increasingly embracing the carbon debt language, Stern spun it as an unfair burden: "I actually completely reject the notion of a debt or reparations or anything of the like." To justify this assertion, he further

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[28] Stephen M. Gardiner, "A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics, and the Problem of Corruption," *Environmental Values* 5, no. 3 (2006).

[29] *Ibid.*, 408.

[30] Jonathan Pickering and Christian Barry, "On the Concept of Climate Debt: Its Moral and Political Value," *Critical Review of International Social and Political PHilosophy* 15, no. 5 (2012): 680.

appealed to the commonsense link between intention and responsibility to excuse the US's

emissions history: For most of the 200 years since the Industrial Revolution, people were blissfully

ignorant of the fact that emissions caused a greenhouse effect. It's a relatively recent

phenomenon."[31] That wealthier countries are resistant to acknowledging greater responsibility for

greenhouse gas emissions does not make it inherently problematic. However, as a way of framing

political agreements, it encourages strategies of disavowal, and, as seen by the Trump

administration's recent decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, it can encourage a cynical

politics of blame shifting. In his statement, President Trump declared, "I cannot in good conscience

support a deal that punishes the United States -- which is what it does -– the world's leader in

environmental protection, while imposing no meaningful obligations on the world's leading

polluters."[32] Here, Trump redeploys conceptions of moral responsibility to defend existing

structures of power and redirect blame to more vulnerable developing nations.

This dynamic is further buttressed by individualized framings of responsibility. Roberts and

Parks show how as a highly unequal global economic and political structure "promotes a social

distribution of economic benefits and environmental burdens that advantages rich countries and

disadvantages poor countries, it also creates political conflicts of an intrinsically *structural* nature."[33]

That is, worldviews, causal beliefs, and principled beliefs of agents do not emerge *ex nihilo*, but are

shaped by structures of global power and histories of patterned behavior. Thus, industrialized

nations reject both the causal beliefs and norms of fairness underpinning ascriptions of greenhouse

gas responsibility, while less developed nations believe that "the North is using environmental issues

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[31] Quoted in Bryan Walsh, "Do Rich Nations Owe Poor Ones a Climate Debt?," *Time*, December 10 2009.
[32] Donald J. Trump, "Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord," news release, June 1, 2017, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/01/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord.
[33] Bradley C. Parks and J. Timmons Roberts, "Climate Change, Social Theory and Justice," *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 2-3 (2010): 145.

as a ruse to thwart poor countries' economic development."[34] By failing to attend to questions of

structure, narratives of personal moral responsibility make it even more difficult to overcome

distrust created by the history of imperial domination and economic exploitation.

In sum, attempts to make sense of climate change through commonsense conceptions of

responsibility depoliticize climate change. This body of scholarship insists, like former Vice

President Al Gore, that the climate crisis is "not a political issue, it's a moral issue. We have

everything we need to get started, with the possible exception of the will to act, that's a renewable

issue, let's renew it."[35] Moral and economic discourse of responsibility rely on dominant market and

legalistic forms of thinking, which "can obscure fundamental and contested questions about what

the good life is and how it is generated through practices," ultimately naturalizing the calculative,

self-responsible, possessive individual of neoliberal capitalism.[36] Even more troublingly, as "eco-

political issues are framed as matters of scientific knowledge, technological innovation, and

managerial perfection," narratives of self-responsibility move "definitional power, issue competence,

and decision-making capacity away from the realm of the political […] to specialist bodies or

authorities, which are equipped with relevant expertise and shielded from political contestation."[37]

Similar to narratives and practices of responsibilization discussed in Chapter 2, these approaches

transform climate change into an individual of individual self-management, while insulating broader

structures of production, exchange, and distribution beyond political contestation.[38] Questions about

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[34] *Ibid.*, 146.

[35] Quoted in Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 51.

[36] Samuel Randalls, "Broadening Debates on Climate Change Ethics Beyond Carbon Calculation," *The Geographical Journal* 177, no. 2 (2011): 131. Randalls further argues that this form of subject creation may actually backfire, as "a highly calculative individual could hold their spare allowances rather than selling them either until the price has reached a significant spike or just on environmental principle" (134). Creating self-responsible and calculative individuals, corporations, or states, may well encourage gaming the system rather than encouraging sustainable practices.

[37] Ingolfur Blühdorn, "Sustainability - Post-Sustainability - Unsustainability," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory*, ed. Teena Gabrielson, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 268.

[38] *Ibid.*, 270-271.

existing political and economic structures – from the consensus on permanent undifferentiated

economic growth[39] to restrictions on population growth[40] – are occluded.

Therefore, I follow Jamieson's assessment that the challenge of climate change requires

revising commonsense conceptions of responsibility.[41] Among the several interlinked features of

climate change which challenge moral intuitions, Jamieson identifies the potential for climate change

to radically remake the world.[42] In particular, the world-constituting power of climate change points

towards the contribution of anticipatory responsibility. As Jamieson summarizes:

> These are questions about the value of features that form the very structure of the
> world within which we make evaluations. Moral evaluations, at least those of the sort
> we are generally prepared to make, arise within these structures rather than being
> about these structures. Commonsense morality operates within a horizon of
> possibility. It is not well-equipped to make judgments about the conditions that fix
> these possibilities.[43]

Climate change requires a shift from dominant narratives of responsibility, from individual choices

and actions to the structural conditions of the world itself. Just as they obscure the role of structures

in generating poverty and transform welfare politics into a project of mitigating bad luck, narratives

of personal responsibility limit the ability to theoretically make sense of and politically respond to

climate change.

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[39] For discussions see: Philip Cafaro, "Beyond Business as Usual: Alternative Wedges to Avoid Catastrophic Climate Change and Create Sustainable Societies," in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, ed. Denis G. Arnold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Andrew Dobson, "Are There Limits to Limits?," in *The Oxford Handbook to Environmental Political Theory*, ed. Teena Gabrielson, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); John Barry, "Green Political Economy: Beyond Orthodox Undifferentiated Economic Growth as a Permanent Feature of the Economy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory*, ed. Teena Gabrielson, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[40] For a discussion see: Diana Coole, "Population, Environmental Discourse, and Sustainability " ibid.
[41] For an overview of the argument see: Jamieson, "Energy, Ethics, and the Transformation of Nature." Gardiner criticizes Jamieson's conclusions. Though he agrees that climate change represents a particularly difficult collective action problem, responding to it requires not a revision of responsibility, but expanding our ordinary conception of collective responsibility. See: Stephen Gardiner, "Is No One Responsible for Global Environmental Tragedy? Climate Change as a Challenge to Our Ethical Concepts," ibid.
[42] The other aspects he identifies are: the expanded scope of action achievable through modern technology, the massive spatial distribution of climate change's causes and effects, the systematic link between carbon emissions and the structure of the global economy, the difficulties in overcoming long term and large scale collective action problems, and the different time horizons at play in climate change. Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 160-166.
[43] Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 167.

III-Anticipatory Responsibility in the Age of the Anthropocene

Taking up this challenge, anticipatory responsibility's four dimensions offer an alternative response to the challenge of climate change, providing a contrasting narrative of building and bridging political communities against the language of blame, debt, and liability. Rather than distributing and settling responsibility to individuals, anticipatory responsibility cares for the world as a common dwelling place for human life and the conditions of possible human flourishing. It focuses on both political and economic structures implicated in carbon emissions, but also the interconnections between humans and non-humans. It conceives of responsibilities not just for actions and potential action, but for the structures that make action possible and determine the realm of possibilities. While it does not provide definitive answers as to the precise responsibilities, it does provide a reframing of four aspects of responsibility for climate change – its temporality, its object, its discharge, and its subject – which generate new political possibilities and avenues for inquiry. I address each in turn.

Anticipatory responsibility's temporal orientation towards future human flourishing shifts the focus from carbon debts towards prospective action; responsibility is something to be claimed rather than ascribed retrospectively. While images of children and pregnancy may align with more common arguments about responsibility to future generations,[44] there are significant differences. First, rather than taking future generations as a given object of responsibility, anticipatory responsibility draws on these images to describe both uncertainty and one's lack of casual control over the future.[45] Thus, this temporal orientation further challenges attempt to calculate and

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[44] For example, Nolt argues that because climate change is a case of current generations dominating future ones, we have a corresponding responsibility to them. Nolt, "Greenhouse gas emission and the domination of posterity," 73-4.

[45] Thus, it is more similar to Sarah Krakoff's argument for "parenting the planet" given that "like parents, they will not know if their contributions, in the end, have had a happy conclusion." Sarah Krakoff, "Parenting the Planet," in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, ed. Denis G. Arnold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 163.

distribute responsibility, instead figuring it as a continual project to ensure the possibilities of human flourishing – enhancing individual and collective capacities in accordance with meaningful life-values – endure into the future.

Second, the image of pregnancy read in terms of the temporality of the eternal recurrence of the same (ERS), emphasizes that anticipating the future requires accounting for how past actions and settlements shape and constrain its emergence. Just as it extends one's vision into the future, the image of pregnancy offers a reminder that one is not responsible for one's own existence, tying individuals to chains of generations extending in both directions. This entails that taking anticipatory responsibility cannot disregard the historical constitution of the problem of climate change, as the history of carbon emissions is constitutive both of the present structure of the world and one's own agency. This cannot be resolved or fully balanced; past emissions have already caused irreversible damage; taking responsibility requires a broader temporal horizon, that integrates the history of greenhouse gas emissions and the political possibilities of prospective action, without insisting on a balance between the two.[46] Instead, accepting that it is impossible to reverse the history of climate change, prospective responsibility must be grounded in the capacities and potentials made possible by this history.[47]

Additionally, as was discussed in Chapter 4, anticipatory responsibility's focus is not simply on mere survival, but on flourishing. Therefore, one's responsibility are not to ensure that future generations are able to exist, but that individuals and communities are able to develop their

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[46] See: Susan Solomon et al., "Irreversible Climate Change Due to Carbon Dioxide Emissions," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 106, no. 6 (2009). This underscores Parfit's non-identity problem, as the actions, behaviors, and policies of the past have not only

[47] Therefore, it shares many similarities with Caney's hybrid approach that combines both retrospective responsibility for past and current emissions with concerns of distributive justice, including capability to endure adaptation and mitigation costs. See: Simon Caney, "Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change," *Leiden Journal of International Law* 18, no. 4 (2005). Caney's proposal is quite valuable, but ultimately relies on an implicit belief that responsibility can be fully accounted for and distributed in the last instance.

capacities and live meaningful lives, in whatever form that will take in a warming world.[48]

Sustainability should be oriented towards future creation rather than mere preservation. This also creates pragmatic and rhetorical benefits, by shifting the framing of debates from negative ones, such as carbon debt, towards more affirmative frames. Rather than relying on a rhetoric of blame which encourages disavowal and displacement, anticipatory responsibility asks different questions. What might be achieved or accomplished? What lasting legacy can be built or what greatness can be achieved? These positive framings appeal to human pride and ambition to create incentives for action rather than deflection.

The second dimension of anticipatory responsibility further distinguishes it from claims of responsibility to future generations. Both shift the object of responsibility away from the past, but in this case the proper object is not future human beings themselves, but the structure of the world itself, extending perpetually in time. Taking responsibility for the world – or in Zarathustra's parlance: giving the earth a human meaning – is to claim responsibility for the social, economic, and political structures of the world that have, and continue to, facilitated both the massive increase in CO_2 levels in the atmosphere and the uneven distribution of costs, benefits, risks, and capabilities. Therefore, it frames discussions of responsibility encouraging in both an ecological and a structural perspective.

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[48] It is helpful to compare anticipatory responsibility to what Jérôme Pelenc et al, drawing on discussions of the capabilities approach in global justice debates. describe as *ex ante* responsibility, or a responsibility "to make sustainable choices in order to maintain the conditions required for human life on earth." Jérôme Pelenc et al., "Sustainable Human Development and the Capability Approach: Integrating Environment, Responsibility and Collective Agency," *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities* 14, no. 1 (2013): 88. Their argument still remains much closer to Jonas's conception of the precautionary principle, than anticipatory responsibility, however. Breena Holland, using the language of a meta-capability, similarly argues that because human capabilities rely on ecological conditions, there is an independent obligation to care for ecosystems. Breena Holland, "Justice and the Environment in Nussbaum's "Capabilities Approach": Why Sustainable Ecological Capacity Is a Meta-Capability," *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (2008). See also: Breena Holland and AMy Linch, "Cultivating Human and Non-Human Capabilities for Mutual Flourishing," in *The Oxford Handbook to Environmental Political Theory*, ed. Teena Gabrielson, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Ecologically, anticipatory responsibility foregrounds the connections and networks between humans, non-human "nature," and the built environment. Human beings should be understood as the result of mutually imbricating "natural" and "social" processes rather than atomistic individuals. Because this ecosystem of forces is constitutive of human action, and therefore partially responsibility for it, humans have a corresponding responsibility to the non-human world. This shifts one's perspective of the non-human world from "an endlessly malleable resource," which encourages economic thinking that forestalls costly action, towards one of collaboration and interaction between humans and the world, which, according to Krakoff, may create a greater incentive to "putting that same dazzling human ingenuity to work to place humanity within, rather than above, the rest of the planet." "If the Earth is a small, limited system that landed, for whatever set of reasons," she concludes, "in our hands, then part of being human is to care for it."[49] Human have a responsibility to care for the environment, because they are inextricably bound to it. As climate change systematically alters the ecological conditions of human flourishing, individuals and political communities have an obligation to maintain these ecosystems as they are the sole place of human dwelling.[50]

Climate change specifically highlights the value this revaluation of responsibility, as suggested by invocations of the concept "the Anthropocene." Technical debates over its geological accuracy aside,[51] the idea that human beings have had a systematic effect on the planetary system on

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[49] Krakoff, "Parenting the planet," 165.

[50] While it attempts to blur and temper strong ontological distinctions between human and nonhuman nature, anticipatory responsibility, therefore, should be distinguished from deep ecological positions that completely eliminate the distinction and flatten evaluative criteria. As Clare Palmer argues, completely eliminating the human perspective is not only difficult but generates significant conceptual confusions. Given both the deep uncertainty over the precise effects of climate change as well as the fact that some organisms, species, and ecosystems will thrive in the changing climate, it is almost impossible to assess the ethical implications of climate change for non-humans. Clare Palmer, "Does Nature Matter? The Place of the Nonhuman in the Ethics of Climate Change," in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, ed. Denis G. Arnold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[51] For an overview and response to common criticisms, see: Jan Zalasiewicz et al., "Making the Case for a Formal Anthropocene Epoch: An Analysis of Ongoing Critiques," *Newsletters on Stratigraphy* 50, no. 2 (2017).

par with a geological force immediately serves, following Jedediah Purdy, as "a call to take

responsibility for a changing planet."[52] Echoing Jonas, discussed in Chapter 4, Purdy claims that the

enhanced power to transform the planet requires a parallel expansion of responsibility. However, it

would be a mistake to read the Anthropocene as a claim about human omnipotence, suggesting that

geoengineering and technological domination over nature are necessary to take responsibility for the

world. Instead, its lessons are that human beings are inseparable from the various assemblages that

constitute nature, that their actions have complex effects on natural processes, and that nature is not

a static background but a dynamic complex web of relationships that must be cared for and

preserved. Anticipatory responsibility is responsibility for the earth as a shared home, not just

between humans, but between all forms of life.[53] It foregrounds the dependence of human

flourishing on non-human nature.

However, while the language of the Anthropocene could help ground human responsibility

for the world, anticipatory responsibility must simultaneously attend to the all too human structures

that perpetuate climate change. As Chakrabarty insists, despite the value in adopting zoological or

geological frames of reference, there are limits to conceptualizing humanity as a single force of

nature. "Politics means having to deal with divisions among humans," he states. "It is precisely

because we humans are not politically one that histories of intrahuman (in)justice and welfare will

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[52] Purdy, *After Nature*, 3.
[53] Haraway's provocative suggestion of "making-kin" is helpful here. She argues that "all earthlings are kin in the deepest sense, and it is past time to practice better care of kinds-as-assemblages (not species one at a time). Kin is an assembling sort of word. All critters share a common 'flesh,' laterally, semiotically, and genealogically." Donna J. Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015): 162. Hence, she uses the interesting, if clunky, term "Chthulucene" to name the "ongoing sym-chthonic forces and powers of which people are a part, within which ongoing is at stake" and which "entangles myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages – including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, and human-as-humus" (160). Dipesh Chakrabarty similarly cautions against interpreting the Anthropocene as human dominance, insisting that "planetary change and the Anthropocene are also events driven by nonhuman, nonliving vectors that work on multiple scales, some of which work on geological scales while some have an influence within the time horizon of one or two human generations." Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Human Condition in the Anthropocene," in *The Tanner Lectures in Human Values* (Yale University2015), 160.

remain relevant and necessary to the efforts we make to cope with climate change."[54] While

anticipatory responsibility qualifies this claim, insisting that politics involves negotiating the divisions

and connections between humans and non-humans as well, his reminder that humanity's political,

economic, and social divisions complicate the idea of humanity as a single geologic agent is valuable.

The *Anthropos* may exert world changing power, but it is beset by political fractures. The economic,

social, and political structure of the world, which differentially distributes vulnerability to climate

change, is as much the object of anticipatory responsibility as the natural world.

    This structural focus brings different aspects of climate change into sharper relief. As

Timothy Mitchell has shown, the production and use of fossil fuels was instrumental in the

development of mass democracies in Europe, the configuration of European imperialism in Africa

and the Middle East, the development of systems of protectorates and self-determination that

upheld the interests of industrialized nations, and the emergence of global economic systems

following the end of the World War II.[55] Taking responsibility for climate change requires

accounting for these structures and working to build alternatives better prepared to effectively

combat climate change. As Robyn Eckersley notes, this framing may cause vertigo, "given the

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[54] Chakrabarty, "The Human Condition in the Anthropocene," 183 For a discussion on the dangers of Anthropocene narratives to obscure inequality and exploitation through a universal conception of humanity, see also: Giovanna Di Chiro, "Environmental Justice and the Anthropocene Meme," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory*, ed. Teena Gabrielson, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). For these reasons many, including Haraway and sociologist Jason W. Moore, have adopted the neologism "Capitalocene" to describe the specific effects that capitalist modes of production have had on the planet. See: Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene," 160 and Jason W. Moore, "The Capitalocene Part I: On the Nature & Origns of Our Ecological Crisis," (2014).

[55] Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (New York: Verso Books, [2011] 2013). Mitchell's argument is far too detailed and complex to be discussed with sufficient attention here, but his argument pays particular attention not only to the fact that fossil fuels allowed for massive increases in population and economic growth. He also shows that differences between coal and oil contributed to different political and economic outcomes. The physical and material demands of extracting and distributing coal gave workers the power to disrupt energy production and gain democratic power in Europe. The story of oil in the Middle East was much more, according to Mitchell, about limiting its supply. Given that oil production and distribution relied on distributed networks, it both hampered the development of democratic movements while simultaneously creating a conception of economics base on infinite growth and production.

enormity of the task of weaning the global economy off fossil fuel consumption and other emissions-generating activities."[56] While foregrounding structural features may create political conflict, backgrounding them "leaves intact social structures that can be expected to generate a widening of the gulf between those who enjoy the benefits and those who suffer the burdens produced in the global risk society, and this will further strip the capability of the already vulnerable to shape their destiny while also making it harder to reach any common ground with the most privileged."[57] Rather than accepting these background structures as given and emphasizing responsible behavior within them, these structures themselves must be the object of political critique, action, and transformation. Because such actions will likely generate political conflict and incur costs, the third and fourth dimensions of anticipatory responsibility – generating power and collective action, respectively – are necessary.

The third dimension of anticipatory responsibility is that it is discharged through political action that generates power and builds lasting institutions. Taking responsibility challenges pessimistic responses, as exemplified by Jamieson's claim that "our failure to prevent or even respond significantly reflects the impoverishment of our systems of practical reason, the paralysis of our politics, and the limits of our cognitive and affective capacities."[58] Jamieson instead advocates a personalized green virtue ethics as the only possibility given this reality.[59] These are unlikely to affect large scale structural change, but further contribute to a growing discontent with politics itself as a

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[56] Robyn Eckersley, "Responsibility for Climate Change as a Structural Injustice," in *The Oxford Handbook to Environmental Political Theory*, ed. Teena Gabrielson, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 351.

[57] *Ibid.*, 358.

[58] Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 178.

[59] *Ibid.*, 186-187. Similarly, Roy Scranton argues that it is necessary to accept that human civilization as we know it has already gone extinct, and that the task is to invent new mythologies, virtues, and stories to generate a new meaning for humanity. Roy Scranton, *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflectiosn on the End of a Civilization* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 2015). Scranton's position, despite its rhetoric, is not one of acquiescence, however. He does argue that we should accept the death of "carbon-fueled capitalism" in order to transform "obsolete social practices into novel forms of life" (23). The affective differences are important however, as such transformation will require mass mobilization and political action, which will have trouble uniting around the maxim "civilization is already dead."

means to decide issues of the common good. Further withdrawing from the political world only naturalizes existing political structures and further isolates individuals making political mobilization more difficult.

"The only way to build a shared living place deliberately is through politics. Collective, binding decisions are how people can give the world a shape that we intend," Purdy writes.[60] Imposing additional taxes on fossil fuel use, investing in sustainability energy sources, and transferring money, technology, and knowledge to developing countries will all generate differential costs, with some countries, industries, corporations, communities, and individuals benefiting at the expense of others. Even if long term benefits could justify these actions in economic terms, fundamental revisions of existing economic structures or wholesale changes in energy production, distribution, and use would call into question such economic thinking itself while imposing even greater burdens. These all require building institutions endowed with coercive authority that kind bind action over long periods of time and for a large number of agents with conflicting interests. Given that existing political institutions seem unable to generate such authority, political action is needed to build new ones.

As such, political leadership, buttressed by Weber's ethic of responsibility for consequences, is necessary for concerted action on climate change. As discussed in Chapter 4, and will be taken up below, the leader need not be conceived of as a single individual. But leadership is required both to begin the process of forging new political practices and institutions and that can accept responsibility for imposing the burdens of action. Framing this as a political dilemma involving distributions of power as well as winners and losers, rather than a neutral moral, economic, or legal question to be settled, is necessary to orient the ongoing political action necessary.

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[60] Purdy, *After Nature*, 19.

Precisely because of these factors, democratic mobilization, the fourth dimension of anticipatory responsibility, is necessary. Legitimating such a political project requires a concerted democratic movement authorizing the costs and burdens associated with fundamental transformations of existing economic and social systems. This involves two moves: first, ensuring democratic avenues for participation and contestation to ensure that the burdens, costs, and unintended consequences are not unjustly laid on the most vulnerable, second, building common collective wills that expand the spatial and temporal senses of democracy.

Democratic legitimation for political responses requires ensuring that avenues of deliberation, contestation, and decision-making remain open to broad citizen participation. Thus, attempts to "replace political and ethical judgments with expert techniques, such as cost-benefit analysis" should be viewed with skepticism.[61] Instead of moving policy-decisions over climate change beyond the realm of political contestation, local, national, and international governing bodies should welcome participation broad communal participation. Failure to do so is likely invite backlash and criticism, as has been seen in public discourse of environmental management in the United States. Additionally, given the uncertainty of both the precise effects of climate changes as well as the ecological, economic, and social consequences of actions taken, it is entirely possible that certain populations can be unjustly and unintentionally saddled with a disproportionate share of these harms. Both broad representation and opportunities for renegotiation are necessary to prevent unjust consolidations of power.

This returns the discussion to the paradox of politics, discussed in Chapter 4, as these types of democratic institutions which are necessary for taking anticipatory responsibility are precisely the types of institutions that citizens taking anticipatory responsibility would seek to create.

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[61] *Ibid.*, 269.

Furthermore, there is legitimate concern opening questions of climate action to democratic

contestation would encourage self-interested delays.[62] For this reason, it is important that calls for

anticipatory responsibility be framed in collective and communal terms and that mass political

movements emerge around the question of responsibility for the earth. While acknowledging that

environmental politics, and climate change in particular, present unique problems for democratic

theory, Elisabeth Ellis argues that these issues can be successfully reframed in democratic terms.[63]

Instead of pursuing either universal consensus or accepting frames of environmental stewardship as

a special interest, she argues that the idea of democratic injustice can be valuably mobilized. "Most

environmental policies take this form: a (usually small) number of extractors reap a short-term

benefit for which a (usually much larger) number of sustainers is forced to pay. Environmental

policy provides exceptionally clear examples of democratic injustice."[64] While verging on moralistic

distribution of blame, this rhetorical move suggests the promise of framing responsibility for climate

change as a democratic response to injustice.

By challenging strong ontological distinctions between humans and non-humans,

anticipatory responsibility raises the further possibility of expanding the scope of democracy. This is

not to claim democratic equality for non-humans; such a project would create numerous conceptual

and political problems, as has been noted.[65] However, attunement to the distinctive causal power

and contributions of non-human entities and processes to existing politics can facilitate a rethinking

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[62] For example, Gardiner's argument about "moral corruption" would support this concern, as the massive scale and complexity of climate change would encourage procrastination or delay. Gardiner, "Perfect Moral Storm," 407-408. For similar arguments see: Purdy, *After Nature*, 20 and Jamieson, *Reason in a Dark Time*, 96-103. Parks and Roberts suggest an even more troubling argument: the history of North/South relations has resulted in increased skepticism over climate change proposals from the developed world. See Parks and Roberts, *Climate of Injustice*, 14-19.

[63] Ellis identifies concerns over paternalism, the need for democratic reversibility, and problems of scope as three particular challenges to democracy. Elisabeth Ellis, "Democracy as Constraint and Possibility for Environmental Action," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory*, ed. Teena Gabrielson, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 506-12.

[64] *Ibid.*, 514.

[65] See: Palmer, "The place of the nonhuman in the ethics of climate change" and Ellis, "Democracy as a Constraint and Possibility for Action," 514.

of nature from a collection of objects to be represented to collaborators and mediators of political life. Appreciating this co-participation of non-humans need not radically revise the existing processes and mechanisms of democracy, but could both expand the scope of issues of concern beyond narrowly defined interests while also reframing responsibility for nature less as a concern for a distinct object separate from human beings.[66] This attention has the potential for expanding existing political imaginations: envisioning conceptions of citizenship[67] and labor,[68] for example, premised on embeddedness, corporeality, and mutually vulnerability. While not a solution in itself, an enlarged political imagination is crucial to orient and motivate democratic movements to combat climate change.

While building a democratic movement, it is important to recognize attend to the internal plurality and differentiation between such a democratic movement. As Di Chiro insists in her critique of the Anthropocene discourse, "The generativity of these diverse political assemblages cannot be captured in the universal 'we' of the Anthropocene story. It matters which stories, knowledges, and worlds/words make our environmental politics."[69] This should be understood in both material and discursive terms. Those better materially equipped should be expected to bear more costs, while those who have suffered injustice from current regimes of energy production should be empowered.[70] Similarly, traditional accounts of nature and histories of industrialization

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[66] For an overview of the potential contributions and limitations of Actor-Network Theory and other discourses that suggest the co-participation of things in politics see: Lisa Disch, "Ecological Democracy and the Co-Participation of Things," in *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory*, ed. Teena Gabrielson, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Purdy also weighs the value of integrating post-humanist insights into democratic theory. Purdy, *After Nature*, 266-282. He concludes with a modest proposal: "a democracy open to the strange intuitions of post-humanism: intuitions of ethical affinity with other species, of the moral importance of landscapes and climates, of the permeable line between humans and the rest of the living world" (282).

[67] See: Teena Gabrielson and Katelyn Parady, "Corporeal Citizenship: Rethinking Green Citizenship through the Body," *Environmental Politics* 19, no. 3 (2010).

[68] See: Alyssa Battistoni, "Bringing in the Work of Nature," *Political Theory* 45, no. 1 (2017).

[69] Di Chiro, "Environmental Justice and the Anthropocene Meme," 375.

[70] Thus, Caney's analysis can offer significant contributions. See: Caney, "Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Climate Change." See also the discussion of Young's "parameters of reasoning" in her account of a social connections model of responsibility in Chapter 4.

should be supplemented with counter-histories favoring perspectives from the global south and indigenous communities. As shifts away from fossil fuels will displace many industries, programs need to be in place for retraining and work in sustainable industries, to challenge narratives of resentment scene so prevalently in the 2016 election. Finally, a democratic movement need not be unanimous. While opposing voices should be heard and legitimate losses addressed, those who ideologically oppose any action on climate change, should not be allowed to preclude action. Responsible action may require mobilization against them.

These paradoxes and challenges close the circle, returning to the question of temporality. Anticipatory responsibility's futural orientation not only describes its focus, but also its own temporal attunement. The political will, power, institutions, and collective agents necessary to effectively respond to the threat of climate change with fundamental structural transformation do not yet exist. As Chakrabarty describes,

> We think of the political figure of humanity as having two, somewhat contradictory, characteristics. First, it is an entity that is capable of projecting itself into the future as a purposeful agency even though the purpose may not always be one that wins universal approval. But we also think of this humanity as always already divided by issues that in turn give rise to issues of justice. It is never an operative, singular agency. Its unity as a political actor is always 'to come.'[71]

Taking anticipatory responsibility must anticipate the political subject capable of bearing it. Citizens and communities must act as if they are responsible for the structure of the world and have the power to transform it. As such, this action will be necessarily slow, difficult, and incremental, working to build a common but differentiated responsible humanity.

IV- Renegotiating Personal and Anticipatory Responsibility

While anticipatory responsibility offers a challenging and provocative response to the dilemmas of climate change that brings into question common assumptions about humanity,

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[71] Chakrabarty, "The Human Condition in the Anthropocene," 159.

freedom, and nature, it would be a mistake to believe that it alone provides substantive answers

necessary. Nor should one conclude that conceptions of personal responsibility have nothing to

contribute to these discussions. Instead, an agonistic approach necessitates holding both contending

interpretations of responsibility and responses to climate change in tension. Each illuminates

different aspects of the dilemma, suggests different responses, and imagines different politics.

Framings of personal responsibility emphasize the differential distribution of carbon emissions,

which can make important contributions to ensuring that the costs and burdens of responding to

climate change are justly distributed. These considerations are valuable, but can encourage

antagonisms and disavowals without a supplementary conception of a united political community,

collectively bearing the burdens as a whole.

Similarly, anticipatory responsibility prioritizes both the importance of structural over

individualistic thinking and identifying potential avenues for political action. However, building a

broad democratic political movement to ensure a flourishing future for humanity on a warming

planet, will require developing nations acknowledging and accounting for their carbon debt to bring

developing nations to the table. Anticipatory responsibility reorients commonsense notions of

responsibility, offering a broader ontological and political vision, but not concrete policy proposals.

Personal responsibility, with its use of moral, legal, and economic framings, is better suited for

adjudicating particular emissions targets, adaptation policies, and international transfers of wealth

and technology, but offers little in terms of broader political goals and vision.

Personal and anticipatory responsibility should therefore be understood as agonistic

positions, contending interpretations of a contestable political concept. While the dynamics of

political life, and the particular challenges of climate change suggest the need for anticipatory

responsibility's more expansive vision, the goal of the political theorist should not be to settle once

and for all which conception is correct or true. Rather, recovering an alternative to the current

political commonsense facilitates a potential shift in perspective. Anticipatory responsibility offers an alternative way to respond to dilemmas of the political world: as interconnected communities acting in concert to preserve the conditions of possible human flourishing rather than as isolated individuals operating in a political and affective economy of blame, guilt, and resentment. This political imaginary may be valuable and useful, but introducing anticipatory responsibility as a contending interpretation forces political actors and theorist to acknowledge that ascriptions of responsibility are political choices that build political worlds rather than moral or metaphysical absolutes.

By their very nature, political dilemmas do not admit of a single, timeless, and universal solution without remainders or losses. Recovering the agonistic tension and contestation over the meaning of responsibility offers a reminder that politics cannot be reduced to moral absolutism, legal fiat, or economic optimization. Political debates reveal fundamental divisions between conceptions of how the world is and should be structured; this essential contestability cannot be easily reconciled through a decision rule or rational procedure. Responsible political action and theory must always attend to this fact of politics. The challenges and dilemmas of politics demand answers, and part of the work of politics is to develop the capacities to respond. These responses are not prescribed or given in nature. In taking responsibility for the world, we must also take responsibility for the meanings, values, and imaginaries we use to make sense of it. By making these explicit, recovering disavowed alternatives, and imagining new political possibilities, political theory is both itself a response to the world and a means to empower further responses. Political dilemmas will never be settled once and for all; responsibility is the burden of politics that can never be relieved.

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