

**Looking Back to Bellamy:
American Political Theology for a New Gilded Age**

BY

NORA LEE WILLI
B.A., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2008
M.A., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2011

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2018

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:

Stephen Engelmann, Chair and Advisor
Norma Moruzzi
Isaac Balbus, Emeritus
Andrew McFarland, Emeritus
Benjamin Lynerd, Christopher Newport University

To my parents,
Mark and Dana Willi...
this is all because of you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my committee--Benjamin Lynerd, Norma Moruzzi, Isaac Balbus and Andrew McFarland--for their aid and encouragement; their collective wealth of knowledge and experience were an immeasurable asset to my project. I extend a special thanks to my committee chair and advisor Stephen Engelmann, who has devoted a great deal of time and effort to working closely with me at every stage of this process and who has allowed me to lean not only on his scholarly expertise but his endless patience.

I also want to thank several of my fellow students for their willingness to read, critique and discuss various iterations of these chapters. Aviral Pathak, Rachel Forgash, Armel Yver, and Roberto Rincon have provided me with valuable and challenging feedback; even more importantly, their friendship and enthusiasm for my work have sustained me through the most trying moments of this journey. I look forward to doing the same for them.

Other readers and commenters include Christopher Chandler and Eboni Washington, both of whom I admire and adore; their intellectual companionship has been of inestimable value to me.

NLW

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. THE NEW AMERICAN MILLENNIUM: REVIVALISM AND UTOPIA.....	29
From Millennium to Progress.....	34
This War is Ours.....	47
II. SOLIDARITY: CIVIC VIRTUE AND THE NEW REPUBLICANISM.....	56
Equal Freedom for All.....	61
Equality--Not Identity--of Interest.....	70
The People Versus the Plutocracy.....	84
III. THE GREAT AMERICAN PROPHET: BELLAMY'S UTOPIAN EXPECTATION.....	93
Utopia and Anxiety.....	97
Finitude and Freedom.....	105
About Time.....	111
On the Risk and Necessity of Utopia.....	118
CONCLUSION.....	128
CITED LITERATURE.....	139
VITA.....	144

SUMMARY

Utopian thinking played an important role during the era of social and political reform that emerged from the labor struggles of the Gilded Age. With its depiction of twenty-first century America as a socialist utopia, Edward Bellamy's 1888 novel Looking Backward was a best-seller in its time; it inspired a nation-wide political response, generating a profusion of newspapers, clubs, and electoral efforts all guided by its vision of economic democracy. This study contextualizes Bellamy's narrative within a deeper tradition of American political thought and, indeed, theology: it traces the roots of his politically "progressive" utopianism as far back as the revivalists of the First Great Awakening, and a post-millennial eschatology that interpreted history as a temporal advancement toward the realization of the kingdom of heaven on earth. It was during the Second Great Awakening that believers began to act on the directive to prepare for Christ's impending return by voluntarily organizing around social reform efforts including abolition, temperance, and women's rights.

I liken Bellamy to the revivalists not only because of his persuasive power--his apparent ability to excite a community of believers and motivate them to political action--but also by virtue of his utopia's narrative structure, which has rhetorical echoes of what Sacvan Bercovitch identifies as the "American jeremiad." Originally associated with the Puritans, it is a narrative that has been embraced in the contemporary era by evangelical cultural warriors on the political Right, who prophesy the nation's decline from former greatness; blaming the sinfulness of secular life, these prophets urge sinners to repent, to turn away from earthly temptation and surrender to the authority of God as the only source of salvation. Andrew Murphy's recent work on the jeremiad supplements this analysis and reveals a related but distinct genre of political-

theological speech. The “progressive jeremiad” trades on the same exceptionalist narrative of American promise, but projects perfection into the future and enters a public call for the fulfillment of the democratic ideal.

As a progressive Jeremiah, Bellamy is a sort of secular prophet of the American civil religion. By setting his utopia in the not-so-distant future, his ideal of economic democracy serves as what Paul Tillich calls a “symbol of expectation”; these symbols bring collective subjectivities into focus and so provide the kind of common orientation that is crucial for the effective use of concerted action. Bellamy was a radical socialist, but his readers encountered his politics through a series of common sense appeals to familiar civic virtues (e.g., personal liberty, equality of interest, the dignity of labor). His themes of democratic solidarity and economic justice had strong resonances with the new labor republicanism, which demanded a collective rethinking of the meaning of freedom in the industrial era, and he shared their demand for a cooperative model of economic self-determination.

Again, Bellamy’s commitment to political and economic solidarity reflected the theological foundations of his social thought. These foundations are perceived most clearly in the existential universalism of his early essay “The Religion of Solidarity,” which displays influences running from the Transcendentalists back through early revivalists like Jonathan Edwards. With the help of Paul Tillich, I draw formal parallels between the kind of personal struggle against finitude that Bellamy’s essay describes and the ultimate meaning of utopia as a persistent mythological narrative. I utilize Bellamy’s work to illustrate Tillich’s claim that utopian fantasy is a by-product of existential anxiety, which he suggests arouses an essential desire within the individual to overcome the experience of alienation by finding perfect reunion

with the ground of all being. In Bellamy's case--and in the case of revivalism more broadly--this desire gives rise to a fantasy of redemption that is projected outward onto the social scene in the form of a universalist ideal that calls believers to condemn the status quo (and their own participation in it) and then work collectively for the fulfillment of utopia's promise. Despite the fact that its promise must necessarily go unfulfilled, Tillich sees utopia as symbol of the freedom and power that human being exercises through its imaginative capacities.

As the plutocratic threat rears its head once more in the twenty-first century, a successful political opposition should recover and re-engage with the utopianism of thinkers like Edward Bellamy, whose idiosyncratic radicalism provided creative momentum and direction to labor's ongoing struggle against the consolidation of wealth and power during the industrial era. The point is not to crudely map anachronistic ideologies onto contemporary circumstances, which naturally present distinct and unforeseen challenges (like the fact that giant multi-national corporations are insensitive to patriotic appeals because they lack the kind of civic allegiances that the nation-state traditionally demands); the point is to engage these historical narratives alongside current conversations about economic inequality and capitalist exploitation, and in company with those regarding systemic and intersectional oppressions based on race, gender, sexual identity, disability, etc. Strategically, extending the roots of counter-hegemonic ideologies into familiar intellectual traditions primes them to be more easily recognized and digested by popular audiences. This is what Bellamy was able to do so effectively for his late-nineteenth-century readers, and it remains a crucial element for the construction of persuasive counter-discourses in this New Gilded Age.

INTRODUCTION

Edward Bellamy published his best-selling novel *Looking Backward* in 1888, in the midst of the Gilded Age labor struggles. It would become the third best-selling American novel of the 19th century, thrusting Bellamy into the social reform spotlight. Quickly upon its publication it inspired a political movement, and within only 4 years there were at least 165 “Nationalist” clubs across the country and as far away as New Zealand. Sadly, Bellamy was plagued with serious health problems during the decade between this novel’s publication and the publication of its sequel *Equality* in 1897. By the time of his death in 1899, the clubs and newspapers had proven to be financially unsustainable and the Nationalist movement had for the most part dissipated. Nonetheless the campaign inspired by Bellamy’s work had a profound effect on the history of the American Left.¹ If nothing else, the “propaganda spadework” of the Nationalists paved the way for many of the economic reforms of the Progressive era.² Bellamy’s utopia inspired a number of great minds in economic and social justice including the sociologist Thorstein Veblen, union organizer and presidential candidate Eugene Debs, the philosopher John Dewey, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Both Dewey and King went so far as to depict Bellamy as the prophet of a new social order.

The narrative of *Looking Backward* follows its protagonist Julian West, a member of late-nineteenth-century Boston’s bourgeoisie. Following a century-long mesmeric sleep he wakes in

¹ Here I use “Left” as a very broad designation meant to call to mind a host of self-proclaimed “progressive” or “reformist” political movements from the nineteenth century to the present day. At times below I use the term Democratic Left, referring to a specific segment of this group that identifies itself with the ideological and policy platform of the contemporary Democratic party. This is the same Left that Rorty refers to critically as the “intellectual Left” or the “Foucauldian Left” in his 1998 book *Achieving Our Country*. It is in contrast to the establishmentarian neoliberalism of the Democratic leadership that the Sanders wing of the party identifies itself as the “progressive” Left.

² Howard Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement* (1953; repr., Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 102.

the year 2001 to find that the city and country have been revolutionized by the nationalization of private industry. Julian is ushered around Boston and introduced to its copious public goods while he is advised as to the advantages of their socialized economy. His hosts ask him a number of probing questions about what they perceive to be clear follies of the old system. Thus the novel's depiction of twenty-first century America as a socialist-democratic utopia functioned as a critique of the excesses of industrial capitalism in Bellamy's own time.³ With it, he entered into a discourse on the changing moral economy of an industrializing nation. As we will see in chapter two below, his utopia served during the Gilded Age to focus collective attention on the nation's substantial social problems and to build political momentum behind progressive solutions to those problems.

Now, in the twenty-first century, our ideological fetishization of "free market" capitalism is being confronted by some devastating economic realities. In the fall of 2011 the Occupy movement introduced a powerful message of solidarity with its slogan "We are the 99%." Since then, mainstream narratives have been slowly changing, turning back to the problem of extreme income and wealth inequality. The notion of a New Gilded Age has gained some traction since the 2014 publication of Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Paul Krugman's review for *The New York Review of Books*, "Why We're in a New Gilded Age," was one of a number of articles written around the same time that utilizes this framing, as was Robert Reich's

³ Bellamy's centralized vision of the State has been frequently lambasted as un-democratic. Take, for example, Arthur Lipow's 1982 book *Authoritarian Socialism in America* in which he identifies Bellamy's Nationalism with an intellectual current that informs the totalitarianism of both Hitler's Third Reich and Stalinist Russia. But such a misappropriation of Bellamy's thought depends upon certain definitions of democracy which, as we will see in chapter two, Bellamy rejects as distracting and dangerous fetishizations.

“Antitrust in the New Gilded Age,” which he posted on his personal blog.⁴ Yet, in a 2016 article for *Religion and Politics* blog, Heath Carter problematizes this narrative in a provocative way:

[W]hatever the similarities between the days of Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Vanderbilt and those of Gates, Buffett, and Bezos, there is this fundamental difference: Our late-nineteenth century forebears were less inclined to give economic inequality their ‘amen.’ In the face of the Gilded Age’s notorious disparities, working people built movements that challenged the underlying structures of industrial capitalism, contributing along the way to an unprecedented, nationwide ferment regarding the shape of a moral economy--and it is on these crucial fronts that the analogy to our own time falls apart.⁵

In response to the horrific indignities, injustices and inequities of the early industrial era, workers began to organize on a large scale for the first time in American history. By directing their anger toward the plutocratic ruling class, those so-called “captains of industry,” working and middle-class people were able to mobilize disparate circles of dissent and put together a coalitional movement to counter the massive political influence of the money power. Carter says that in the twenty-first century the American public appears to be too complacent to mount a broad and meaningful response to the plutocratic excesses of the modern elite.

Moreover, this New Gilded Age is characterized by a significantly different set of economic circumstances from the original. Whereas late-nineteenth century America was experiencing a time of genuine economic growth as a result of the industrial revolution, the contemporary situation is one of relative stagnation and deindustrialization. Thus Andrew O’Hehir, executive editor at Salon.com, calls this New Gilded Age “a bigger con job than the first one,” saying it is “a forgery of a forgery of prosperity”: “Instead of Andrew Carnegie

⁴ Paul Krugman, “Why We’re in a New Gilded Age,” *The New York Review of Books*, May 8, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/05/08/thomas-piketty-new-gilded-age/> (accessed March 15, 2017). Robert Reich, “Antitrust in the New Gilded Age,” personal blog, April 16, 2014, <http://robertreich.org/post/82938136466> (accessed March 15, 2017).

⁵ Heath Carter, “Why We’re Not in a New Gilded Age,” *Religion and Politics* (blog), Washington University, February 9, 2016, <http://religionandpolitics.org/2016/02/09/why-were-not-in-a-new-gilded-age/> (accessed March 15, 2017). The author says he has yet to see anything like “a fundamental, Gilded Age-style rethinking of the nation’s economic life.” (He calls Bernie Sanders’ presidential campaign, which at the time the article was written had not yet gained its full momentum, “the major exception to the prevailing rule”; he applauds Sanders for treating “wealth and income inequality [as] the moral issue of our time.”)

founding libraries, we have Donald Trump yelling at people on television like a low-rent parody of the Calvinist God.”⁶ And while O’Hehir made this comparison long before anyone believed that Donald Trump would make the move from reality television to the presidency, his administration, stacked with billionaire donors, is perfectly representative of what happens when the fraud and ostentation of the super-rich business and political elite are for too long met by a cynical and apathetic public.

One great advantage of the New Gilded Age narrative in this post-*Citizen’s United* epoch is that it prompts us to begin thinking in strategic terms about a New Progressive Era. This framing would push today’s Left to think about how we are organizing and to form a comprehensive vision of what a more just society needs to look like; more importantly it would remind us of our power, of the fact that we’ve come together before and that we can do it again. During America’s first Gilded Age popular utopian imagery like Bellamy’s helped to make possible the sense of political solidarity that according to Carter is absent at the present moment. The great proliferation of utopian literature at the end of the nineteenth century is evidence that the kind of intense and widespread desperation experienced by a majority of Americans during the nation’s first Gilded Age *can* give rise to an imaginative and politically productive desire for radical change.⁷ But now, in this new Gilded Age, when we are most in need of powerful utopian symbolism, all around us is dystopia. Not only do classic literary dystopias like *Brave*

⁶ Andrew O’Hehir, “The New Gilded Age: A bigger con job than the first one,” *Salon*, April 26, 2014, http://www.salon.com/2014/04/26/the_new_gilded_age_a_bigger_con_job_than_the_first_one/ (accessed March 15, 2017).

⁷ The recognized count of American utopian novels over the final 15 years or so of the nineteenth century rests around 160, according to leading scholars in the field. Lyman Tower Sargent, a researcher of the history of English language science fiction and utopian novels, uses the publication of *Looking Backward* as a specific turning point in the history of modern utopianism. Because the number of utopias written in the nineteenth century prior to 1888 was roughly equal to the number written between 1888 and 1900, he divides nineteenth-century utopianism into pre- and post-Bellamy eras [Lyman Tower Sargent, “Themes in Utopian Fiction Before Wells,” *Science Fiction Studies* 3, 3, (November 1976)].

New World and *1984* resonate more than ever with today's audiences, we have seen a recent explosion of book, film and television series with apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic themes. The tremendous popularity of the *Hunger Games*, the *Divergent Series* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, to take just a few of the many examples, reveals the dark cast of the social imaginary under late-capitalism. Meanwhile, utopia remains conspicuously absent as a mainstream genre. The absence of utopian themes in our popular culture and public discourses, especially in post-9/11 America, raises some questions: Why is it that even as technological innovation opens up ever-greater avenues for exploration, we have quit dreaming of happier futures? Why is it that we dream of a world where human power is tragically misused, instead of one where it is invested in pursuit of our professed collective ideals of freedom and justice? How has dystopia come to feel more real than utopia?

My project is motivated by the perception that this cultural inclination to dystopian rather than utopian imagery is a symptom of a pervasive political cynicism, at least or especially in the United States. Perhaps it is because the twentieth century saw the failure of grand progress narratives that cynicism has come lately to look like the only safe or reasonable intellectual position for one to occupy. On the far-Right, some fundamentalist Christians are attracted to an apocalyptic vision of the future as a fulfillment of Biblical prediction, which drives their apparent effort to ally white Christians in a global battle not only against Islam, but ultimately against all non-believers. In the center, neo-libs and neo-cons pursue foreign and domestic policies that enrich and empower the already rich and powerful. On the Democratic Left, this cynicism has led to what philosopher Richard Rorty describes as a politics of despair and detachment: a politics that preoccupies itself with the elimination of interpersonal sadisms rather

than with working to organize poor and working-class constituencies in the effort to gain political power and move the nation closer toward their ideal.

In *Achieving Our Country* (1998) Rorty argues that the cynical agenda of the neoliberal status quo has landed us in a world where the “American Dream” of free enterprise and upward mobility has been exported around the globe, becoming an extraordinary reality for a few, but remaining a cruel delusion for many. While he is serious about a kind of economic populism in service of “decent” and “civilized” aims, he argues against the kind of populist fervor that is riled up on the Right, which is exclusionary by nature.⁸ However, he warns, the contemporary Left is in no position to counter a Right that will become more ideological and reactionary as the world’s population is further divided into a cosmopolitan internationalist “overclass” and a perpetual “underclass” of debt slaves.

The problem, as Rorty sees it, is that many of us have become so preoccupied with our society’s failures to live up to our ideal image of it that we have forgotten how to organize around a promise for our collective future. For him, the best of American political culture is distinguished by its utopianism. He praises the pre-Sixties reformist Left for its loyalty to the old “civil religion” of John Dewey and Walt Whitman, whose secular democratic liberalism “put shared utopian dreams--dreams of an ideally decent and civilized society--in the place of knowledge of God’s Will, Moral Law, the Laws of History, or the Facts of Science.”⁹ While Rorty rejects what he calls “utopianism in the bad sense”--the kind that encourages violence in

⁸ While disagreeing about the specific term populism, what Rorty is talking about lines up with Jan-Werner Mueller’s conclusions in *What is Populism?* (2016). Mueller argues that populism is essentially anti-pluralist and, therefore, undemocratic. It is a moralistic reaction to the perception that a nation’s ruling elites fail to take seriously the claims of ordinary citizens. Mueller concludes that the Bernie Sanders campaign is *not* populist because it is *not* anti-pluralist. For him, left-wing populism looks more like Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela; not even the late-nineteenth century People’s Party, i.e., the original Populists, were populist according to this stipulative analysis.

⁹ Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 106-7.

defense of abstract principles--he insists elsewhere that “the only way we can criticize current social rules is by reference to utopian notions which proceed by taking elements in the tradition and showing how unfulfilled they are.”¹⁰ Yes, utopia is always only aspirational, but without “loyalty” to the dream, “the ideal has no chance of becoming actual.”¹¹

Without a voice for utopia we are left with a cynical politics that denies the possibility of a happier future and saps us of the energy to innovate. Without even the will to imagine alternative futures, how can we expect to implement change? The political value of utopian narratives lies in their capacity to serve symbolically as a bridge between worlds--the world that is and the world that will be. Utopianism does the opposite of what cynicism does: it affirms norms where cynicism destroys them. Still, Rorty and Bellamy are not writing scripts for collective futures, but are instead taking politics seriously as a discursive exercise. Their embeddedness within these narratives indicates that we can find political value in their practical effects. For both of these thinkers, utopian imagery has the power to move and encourage public discourse by reframing conversations about the nation’s ideals, its possible futures, and its economic and moral metabolisms.

Looking Backward and its sequel *Equality* helped to reframe the popular view of economic justice as it stood in this newly industrializing nation, giving fire to the ongoing struggles for economic and social justice. Even if the desired endpoint for most on the Left was not and is not Bellamy’s statist solution, his utopian demand for absolute economic equality still

¹⁰ Richard Rorty, “From Philosophy to Postphilosophy,” in *Take care of truth and freedom will take care of itself*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 24-5.

¹¹ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 101.

moves us, crucially, in the direction of political solidarity. It calls to mind the expectation of an American future in which technical and scientific expertise is supplemented by and maintained according to ethical, political, and social norms of democratic solidarity to ensure that none of the republic's citizens are left behind due to morally arbitrary factors like class, gender, race, or religion. As Bellamy's biographer Arthur Morgan appreciates, "the most immediate handicap to human progress is lack of vision and expectation, hope, desire, and will, rather than lack of those forms of intelligence which are expressed in formal reasoning"; "unless a picture exists of what might be," he says, "formal reasoning will concern itself with other and familiar issues."¹² As a genre, utopia is politically effective because it encourages audiences to distance themselves from the psychological familiarity of their immediate surroundings and to imagine new possibilities for organizing collective life. The argument, therefore, is that a utopian position is sometimes necessary for what is produced through the fight, for what comes out on the other side of the political process.

During America's first Gilded Age, political utopias like Bellamy's helped to popularize critical discourses and collectivist solutions. Without them we wouldn't have so many of the essential public goods that we now do. Of course, the discursive climate at that time was one in which alliances and ideologies were in flux. Compared to the polarized and relatively predictable character of contemporary American party politics, in which positions on a variety of religious, social and political issues are more easily mapped onto a fairly flat left-right spectrum, there were at that time a number of issue-spectrums that interacted and overlapped. One could be a religious liberal while proclaiming bourgeois values, like Henry Ward Beecher, or a

¹² Arthur Morgan, *Edward Bellamy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), xv.

religious liberal with socialist tendencies, like Walter Rauschenbusch, or a religious conservative proponent of economic populism, like William Jennings Bryan. Add to the mix a number of other socially divisive issues including women's rights, immigration, and the labor question, and we see how political alliances during this period were inevitably multiple and fluid.

Progressivism did not imply a single political ideology as we would expect for it to today--it merely implied the belief that human beings are capable of improving the human condition without the assistance of divine intervention. A fundamental disagreement still remained between individualists and populists over whether this progress would be achieved primarily as a personal matter through hard work and the cultivation of moral virtue, or whether it would be realized through collective advancement in both the economic and ethical realms.

Progressivism in the late-nineteenth century was a broad designation for any ideology that had inherited the paradigm of post-millennialism (which, as we will see in chapter one, interprets human history as a steady march toward Christ's return and thousand-year-reign over a utopian kingdom of heaven on earth). In this Bellamy follows in a rich tradition of American theologians and revivalist preachers that includes Jonathan Edwards and Charles Grandison Finney. Bellamy's utopian socialism also preached an early version of Rauschenbusch's Social Gospel theology. That is, at a time when the cruel bite of poverty, brutal working conditions, and a general sense of injustice on the part of the poor, working and middle classes led to the eruption of political and social crises over the final decades of the nineteenth century, Bellamy saw it as a Christian duty to work for a more just and less cruel society. He argued that wealth inequality and the suffering it caused was morally arbitrary and economically unnecessary, that

these conditions could be rectified by foresight and cooperation so long as there existed the political will to do so.

This message was counter to the theological fatalism of a figure like Henry Ward Beecher, a man whom Bellamy admired for his work as an abolitionist prior to and during the Civil War, but who in the industrial era was excusing the economic domination and exploitation of the working masses in the name of individual market liberty. Beecher thought that economic inequality was the natural and inevitable consequence of a “free” system, one that supposedly distributes rewards in a disinterested and meritocratic way; therefore, he argues, it would be foolish and indeed wrong to interfere with God’s work by promoting the redistribution of wealth through socialist reform. This kind of rhetoric would serve to keep Americans in the late-nineteenth century from recognizing a common interest in establishing a society free from the kinds of structural oppressions and inequalities that characterize the rule of industrial capital. The prosperity gospel plays a similar role in contemporary political-theological discourse. It minimizes public awareness of the destructive effects of corporate consolidation on the middle and working classes by shifting responsibility for success and failure onto the isolated individual. The tag “prosperity gospel” is commonly applied to the kind of Christianity that grew up with televangelism in the 80’s and 90’s, and is often associated with some well-known figures in Evangelicalism like Pat Robertson and Joel Osteen who preach that riches and power are blessings from God. Like that of the bourgeois liberals, the political doctrine of the prosperity gospel pushes back against structural critiques of wealth inequality by emphasizing the centrality of personal virtue and morality to the art of making money and by insisting that the spirit of wealth accumulation need not be considered antithetical to Christian doctrine. The idea that

wealth and success represent divine reward while poverty reflects deficiency of moral character takes the tension away from group domination and deflects from consideration of the structural effects of race, gender, and class.

In April 2016 literary journalist and professor Jeff Sharlet wrote an article for the *New York Times* called “Donald Trump: American Preacher,” in which he claims that Trump, a man for whom the appearance of wealth and success is everything, is *the* candidate of the prosperity gospel. It was only in the summer of 2016, after it became clear that Donald Trump was going to win the Republican nomination, that evangelical leadership began to coalesce around him in the effort to manufacture the image of a “chosen” candidate. Several of these figures would not only endorse but predict a Trump presidency, claiming to have heard God’s prophecy.¹³ Their efforts were a success: in the end, 8 out of every 10 voters who self-identify as white Evangelical Christians voted for the Republican candidate--his 81% matches George H.W. Bush’s all-time high in 1988.¹⁴ The coalition that propelled Trump to his electoral college victory appears to be a contemporary reiteration of the Reagan coalition. This was a victory that rested upon the money of super-rich conservative donors and a rhetorical strategy that appealed to the party’s conservative base, incorporating the racial and economic resentments of the so-called alt-right and the eschatological expectations of Christian fundamentalists into a lament about the nation’s supposed fall from grace, followed by a vague call--again, in a direct appropriation of Reagan’s 1980 slogan--to “Make America Great Again.”

¹³ Josh Hafner, “Meet the evangelicals who prophesied a Trump win,” *USA Today*, November 10, 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/11/10/meet-evangelicals-prophesied-trump-win/93575144/> (accessed March 3, 2017).

¹⁴ Gregory A. Smith and Jessica Martinez, “How the faithful voted: a preliminary 2016 analysis,” *Pew Research Center*, November 9, 2016, <http://www.people-press.org/2004/12/06/religion-and-the-presidential-vote/>; <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/> ft_16-11-09_religh_exitpoll_religrace/ (accessed March 3, 2017).

Still, notwithstanding the fact that white Evangelicals have formed one of the most significant and loyal voting blocks of the Republican base since the Reagan era, we might struggle to explain how such a large number of people would be willing to line up behind a man who represents so much that their faith repudiates. *How* does this work? Sharlet's interpretation of the "Trump phenomenon" resists the temptation to rationalize and instead points to the candidate's considerable ability to stir audiences emotionally.

When I ask Trump supporters what they love most about his rallies, they're at a loss; all of it, they say, "just, just" -- the way it makes them feel. How *much* it makes them feel. American politics tends to produce a limited emotional range, mostly positive, peppered with indignation. But Trump scrawls across the spectrum: not just anger but rage; love and, yes, hate; fear, a political commonplace, and also vengeance. It doesn't feel political.

It doesn't *feel* political. Issues fade. "Trumpism" is a cult of personality--when he wins, his supporters feel like they are winning. In Sharlet's story Trump plays the role of the charismatic preacher who arouses, who agitates, who incites his audience to act on their feelings out into the world. Sharlet's claim is that "the ethos of the prosperity gospel is the key to Trump's power to persuade people that victory can be theirs--that the greatness of Trump is the means of making America great again."¹⁵ His rhetorical tactics are reminiscent of a kind of third-rate contemporary revivalism, which rather than engaging earnestly with the relevant ideological or theological frameworks attempts merely to shape audience response on an emotional level. As we will see below, this image of revivalism is at odds with that embodied by eighteenth and nineteenth-century figures like Edwards and Finney (and for that matter Bellamy) whose careful use of narrative form provides the contexts necessary for audiences to make sense of their affective demands.

¹⁵ Jeff Sharlet, "Donald Trump: American Preacher," *The New York Times*, April 12, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/17/magazine/donald-trump-american-preacher.html> (accessed March 9, 2017).

“Trumpism,” as Sharlet calls it, exemplifies how the contemporary Right uses emotional appeals to a sense of civic pride to generate political momentum on the Right; Rorty’s point is that the Left must tell these stories too if they expect to have any kind of effect on the laws of our nation. His concern is that without ideal visions of American democracy our struggle to protect important political and social norms in the contemporary era is going to be much more difficult. This is why he insists that the critical despair of the intellectual Left must become a hopeful desire for change. They must think constructively about exciting and uniting coalitions and, ultimately, the traditional politics of winning elections and passing legislation. He suggests that they revive some kind of utopian imagery and messaging as part of an electoral strategy:

This Left will have to stop thinking up ever more abstract and abusive names for the ‘system’ and start trying to construct inspiring images of the country. Only by doing so can it begin to form alliances with people outside the academy--and, specifically, with the labor unions. Outside the academy, Americans still want to feel patriotic. They still want to feel part of a nation which can take control of its destiny and make itself a better place.¹⁶

The trouble right now is that the cynicism of this Left alienates an American public that still wants to believe. Rorty fears that the disappointment of voters will turn, if it hasn’t already, into a dangerous disaffection.

The 2016 presidential election proved him correct to a certain extent. Having moved away from their social welfare foundations and toward a neoliberal centrism, the Democratic party couldn’t respond credibly to the economic and other concerns of voters. Many Americans were fed up with how their personal interests had been sacrificed over the past several decades to the interests of corporate profit. Their resentment was easily channeled in this election by cultural warriors on the Right who have made it their mission to speak for the (white, Christian) working-class. It is not only that Hillary Clinton wrote off so many on the Right as irredeemably

¹⁶ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 99.

“deplorable” that pushed them to embrace Trump’s populism--it is also the fact that for the past several decades Democrats have espoused the same centrist economic policies as Republicans, policies that serve the interests of corporate and billionaire donors at the expense of working and middle class people. Because they fail to present voters with any substantial economic alternative, it is no surprise that Trump’s emotional and tribalistic rhetoric resonates so strongly with a certain segment of the American population.¹⁷

The political effectiveness of this kind of affective rhetoric, especially as it has been utilized on the Right over the past several decades, is the motivating concern of William Connolly’s 2008 book *Capitalism and Christianity: American Style*. In it Connolly seeks to explain why members of the working- and middle-classes identify with the economic interests of the upper classes and doggedly follow the cues of business, political, and religious elites when they look to shore up electoral support. To do so he adopts Gilles Deleuze’s concept of a “resonance machine,” an echo chamber of sorts wherein the unarticulated elements of seemingly autonomous paradigms respond to the pull of power structures in similar enough ways that they are drawn together into a mode of interaction that generates a system with momentum of its own. Connolly argues that for all of their apparent ideological differences “the bellicosity and corresponding sense of extreme entitlement of those consumed by economic greed reverberates with the transcendental resentment of those visualizing the righteous violence of Christ” to

¹⁷ This is Thomas Frank’s point in his influential 2004 book *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* Frank argues that because the Democratic Party has come over the past several decades to espouse the same economically conservative policies as the Republican Party, political battles now basically revolve around cultural issues like abortion, gay marriage, and public religiosity--issues that effectively turn out the GOP’s white Christian base. Importantly, Frank’s analysis respects the agency of Kansans. Instead of framing them as dupes, fooled by the rhetoric of the religious Right, he treats them as rational voters who have nowhere else to go in terms of economic interest anyway.

produce an “evangelical-capitalist resonance machine” characterized by an ethos of entitlement and revenge.¹⁸

Like Sharlet’s, Connolly’s diagnosis is valuable because it avoids the vain attempt to tell a coherent story about alliances that are logically inconsistent, as conventional rationalist analyses do. Instead he describes the machine in terms of how it operates: it operates, in part, by spinning a “culture war” narrative wherein contemporary political debate in America is framed as an ideological battle between “good” and “evil.” The most famous statement of the terms of the divide comes from a speech made by Pat Buchanan in support of the candidacy of George H.W. Bush at the 1992 Republican National Convention.

My friends, this election is about more than who gets what. It is about who we are. It is about what we believe, and what we stand for as Americans. There is a religious war going on in this country. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as was the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America.¹⁹

The “enemies” of these culture warriors include atheists, homosexuals and “abortionists,” but also the Left as broadly conceived, all of the collectivists who “hate freedom.”

The culture war rhetoric is a proven strategy for the Republican party. Over the past two or three decades it has been used to win elections and change policies at the state and federal levels. Connolly claims that animus among white working-class males has intensified in response to the conspicuous lack of a class dimension in the mainstream political discourses disseminated by the civil rights, women’s, and LGBT movements during the latter half of the twentieth century.²⁰ That resentment, which might otherwise be aimed productively toward developing structural resolutions to shared problems, is channeled by methods of affective

¹⁸ William Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 48.

¹⁹ Patrick Buchanan, “Culture War Speech,” address to the Republican National Convention, Houston, TX (August 17, 1992), <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/buchanan-culture-war-speech-speech-text/> (accessed May 20, 2017).

²⁰ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity*, 30.

manipulation (television, advertising, music and film, social media, on and on) into scapegoat attacks on “out-groups.” Connolly calls this a “compensatory politics of individual aspiration” because it rewards individuals for their allegiance to a political ideology that works against their long-term economic interests by offering them the feelings of belonging that come from recognizing oneself as a member of the “in-group.” This payoff keeps individuals psychologically committed to a machine that works against their own well being by isolating them from potential communities in order to exploit public goods for private profit.

Why is it that so many people cling to a politics of individual aspiration, even when it operates against their own interests, rather than pursue a politics of solidarity? The way that a “compensatory politics” operates at the individual level is the theme of Lauren Berlant’s 2011 book *Cruel Optimism*, which begins by describing the breakdown of the ideological expectations that structure not only the American Dream but also the broader neo-liberal order. “The fantasies that are fraying include,” she says, “upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and lively, durable intimacy” as well as “meritocracy,” which she describes as the expectation that following rules of fairness and reciprocity will amount to a life that “adds up.” Because these fantasies of bourgeois liberalism have been making sense of our collective lives for some time now, she wants to know, what happens when they stop adding up? Why do people remain attached to fantasies that are so obviously out of their reach? What she finds is that often these fantasies continue to organize our lives, but they do so in a different way--in a self-destructive way. The phrase “cruel optimism” specifically refers to relationships of attachment wherein “the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially.”²¹

²¹ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 1.

Optimism, she insists, need not *feel* optimistic; in fact, it need not feel any particular way at all. Optimism is simply a kind of affective attachment that subjects employ as tools to “manage the incoherence of lives that proceed in the face of threats to the good life they imagine.”²² It is a way of organizing the present, she says--“an orientation toward the pleasure that is bound up in the activity of world-making, which may be hooked on futures, or not.”²³

Berlant’s objective is fundamentally anti-utopian. She is not interested in re-instituting new hegemonic visions of “the good life.” Rather, she adopts a queer orientation toward the political that explicitly resists the temptation to think in terms of coercive, collective futures.²⁴ Insofar as this focuses our attention on the concrete needs of recognizable individuals it is a perspective that helps us to think about politics as a practice of public ethics instead of as a rationalist project of rulership. In theory, it looks like a reasonable attempt to avoid the coercive traps of dogmatic or normative ideologies. But I would argue that the activity of imagining and communicating about possibilities and shared futures is so essential to what politics *is*, that to ignore that future dimension is to risk further political disintegration.

Connolly hints vaguely at the need for utopia’s return when he recommends that the Left learn to incorporate “positive visualization” into a counter-resonance machine to combat the destructive imagery coming from the Right.²⁵ This is because “change proceeds by attraction,

²² Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 9-10.

²³ Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 14.

²⁴ In his 2004 book *No Future* Lee Edelman critiques the kind of “reproductive futurism” that maintains the normative political order. The cultural fantasy revolves around the innocent Child, a figure that symbolizes the logic of futurism by encouraging a repetitive politics that sacrifices present concerns--about the lives and freedoms of real adults--for the sake of the imaginary future of an imaginary child. For Edelman, and for Berlant, queerness represents a threat to these fantasies because by promoting non-reproductive sexualities and challenging normative gender roles it refuses to worship at the feet of the Child.

²⁵ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity*, 94-5.

exemplification, and inspiration as well as by argument, coercion, power, and intransigence, which never subsist alone.”²⁶ Especially during an era of populist agitation, when the time for new alignments is ripe, utopian imagery locates scenes of shared sensation and generates what Paul Tillich calls “symbols of expectation,” which provide direction and build political momentum as they are communicated among the public. I share Connolly’s commitment to the proliferation of positive, collective identifications that will challenge the divisive and dystopian messaging coming out of the evangelical-capitalist resonance machine--messaging that is cruel and destructive insofar as it encourages lower-class Americans to identify with fantasies of upward mobility, wealth and success, even while compelling them to support policies that actively hinder their ability to realize those fantasies. On the other hand, I am skeptical of the credence Connolly gives to a neuroscientific account of political identity and behavior:

The affect-imbued ideas that compose [identities] are installed in the soft tissues of affect, emotion, habit, and posture, as well as the upper reaches of the intellect. Once installed, these sensibilities trigger preliminary responses to new events, even before the respondents think consciously about the events. This is particularly so when complementary dispositions loop back and forth in a large political machine, with each constituency helping to crystallize, amplify, and legitimize one set of dispositions displayed by the others.²⁷

His focus on affect highlights the pre- and extra-rational aspects of political subjectivity, which is valuable. However, it also introduces a kind of mind-body dualism--an anti-intentionalist paradigm that, in its crusade against rationalism, overstates the primacy of bodily affect.

Here I agree with some important criticisms of the “affective turn” in the humanities and social sciences. Clare Hemmings, in her 2005 push back against claims of affective autonomy, singles out the influential work of Eve Sedgwick and Brian Massumi, respectively. Hemmings does recognize affect as a crucial element of good cultural theory; what she objects to is the

²⁶ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity*, 91.

²⁷ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity*, 44.

“contemporary fascination with affect as outside social meaning.” Stressing the importance of narrative context, her claim ultimately is that “affect might in fact be valuable precisely to the extent that it is not autonomous.”²⁸ Ruth Leys reiterates Hemmings’s emphasis on situating context in her 2011 critique of affect theory’s place in the humanities and social sciences. Again she points to Massumi and Sedgwick, among others, who she says are evidently motivated by “the desire to contest a certain account of how, in their view, political argument and rationality have been thought to operate.”²⁹ Also targeted here is Connolly, who has led the affective trend onto mainstream political-theoretical terrain over the past two decades or so. Leys suggests that these theorists place such an emphasis on neuroscientific materialism that they often pay insufficient attention to the role played by narrative, ideology, and belief. She argues that this presents “such a radical separation between affect and reason as to make disagreement about meaning, or ideological dispute, irrelevant to cultural analysis.”³⁰ Leys characterizes Connolly’s affective political theory as one that implies that “political views are nothing but the expression of purely personal preferences, so that preferring democracy to despotism is like preferring tea to coffee.”³¹ This is a position that leaves room only for a cynical political strategy wherein “manipulations operating below the level of ideology and consciousness can only be countered by manipulations of a similar kind.”³²

²⁸ Clare Hemmings, “Invoking Affect: Cultural theory and the ontological turn,” *Cultural Studies* 19: 5 (September 2005): 565.

²⁹ Ruth Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry* 37, 3 (Spring 2011): 436.

³⁰ Leys, “Affect,” 472.

³¹ Leys, “Affect,” 452.

³² Leys, “Affect,” 461.

This points to the political need to distinguish between triggering and persuasion. Whereas persuasion is tied up with rational reflection, triggering is something that happens before one is able to “think consciously about the events.”³³ Insofar as it privileges cuing over reasoning, behavior over action, triggering is inherently anti-political. Therefore, I would caution that building a political strategy around affective triggering instead of persuasion and coalition building risks treating political questions as questions of scientific expertise and/or marketing strategy (“problem-solving” and “image-making”: the twin pillars of degenerate politics as Hannah Arendt identifies them in her essay “Lying in Politics”³⁴). Upon this view politics could easily devolve into a power struggle between ethno-nationalists and neoliberals, wherein public opinion is cultivated to respond, predictably and en masse, according to the cues we receive from the media. And in the age of online social media this project of cultivation is near-constant and especially emotionally impressive for a number of reasons, including the combination of visual and auditory messaging and the fact that these messages are spread across networks that usually include one’s close friends, relatives, and acquaintances.

The technocratic dream would dissolve the political altogether in favor of a mechanistic form of governance; the trouble is, it doesn’t work. Connolly describes the resonances between Evangelical and capitalist discourses as a machine, as something that can be tinkered with and manipulated purposefully by party technocrats in order to initiate specific desired reactions from the public. Trump’s election proves, however, that the resonance machine is not as receptive to their tinkering as they would like to think. The machine seems to have run amok, and the familiar religious and economic ideologies have escalated into a tribalistic rhetoric of enmity.

³³ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity*, 44.

³⁴ Hannah Arendt, “Lying in Politics,” in *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972).

On the campaign trail and ever since, Trump has gained the support of his white, Christian, working-class base by demonizing “outsiders”--those who they feel are not like them, whether this has to do with race, religion, nationality, or political ideology. Narratives of enmity open the door to all kinds of unintended consequences, not the least of which is an increasing tendency to meet difference with violence.

While the success of the Sanders campaign in 2016 could likewise be attributed to his willingness to name political enemies (corporate greed, the 1%, Wall Street), his rhetoric has more in common with Bellamy’s than it does with Trump’s because the enemy that Bernie poses is essentially institutional, not personal. Bellamy and Bernie both resolve the ostensible tension between their universalist messaging and the strategic need to name enemies by demonizing the capitalist system itself as the root cause of the symptoms that manifest in individuals and groups of individuals. Bellamy describes a sort of master-slave dialectic in which it isn’t only the poor and working-classes that are being hurt by the greed and corruption of the ruling class, it is society as a whole. The story he tells of the peaceful evolution from a capitalist to a socialist economy hinges on the idea that the social and personal advantages of nationalizing industry will eventually become so obvious that even those who benefit most from the status quo will willingly support the transition.

This is why I am arguing that it is more politically useful to think in terms of persuasion rather than triggering. Persuasion retains a respect for individual agency, for the commons as a space for public discussion, and for political action as a discursive exercise. While there is an affective dimension to the process of persuasion, affect is not thought to have the power to determine behavior itself. Connolly overestimates the extent to which this kind of political

manipulation is independent of discourses that extend the collective political imaginary backward and forward through time. By contrast, my project bears in mind the point made by both Hemmings and Leys that affect is most useful as an analytical device when understood *within context*. Connolly's rather vague take on spirituality treats it as affective and experiential, but the fact of the matter is that theological beliefs develop in dynamic accordance with the narrative traditions and modes of reasoning and argumentation that we encounter in our personal and public lives.

It is with this in mind that my chapter one outlines the complex relationship between post-millennial theology and post-bellum political progressivism, arguing that Christian millennialism is the ideological forebear of the kind of secular progress narratives that sustain both liberal democratic and socialist ideals of society and government. It also shows how grassroots political organizing in the United States grew up during periods of religious revival. Revivalist preaching is uniquely characterized by its capacity to evoke emotional responses and powerful conversion experiences from listeners. Accordingly, I frame Bellamy's Nationalism as a sort of "secular revivalism." I use secular here in the same sense Rorty uses it to refer to the American civil religion of which John Dewey and Walt Whitman are representatives, and I use the concept of revival to evoke an image of Bellamy as a "prophet" of that civil religion.

To support this characterization I place his narrative within what is probably the most recognizable prophetic tradition within American political-theological discourse: the jeremiad. Sacvan Bercovitch's groundbreaking 1978 work *The American Jeremiad* revealed it as a sermon form in which preachers would idealize the nation's founding generation while lamenting the sins and inadequacies of second-generation Puritans and the decline of their status

as God's chosen people. What made it so politically powerful was the preachers' final call for their congregations to repent and obey both earthly and heavenly authority. Andrew Murphy's 2008 book *The Prodigal Nation* updates and expands this thesis, arguing that jeremiadic narratives of decline continue to be used as a tool of political mobilization, especially by the conservative Right in the context of the so-called culture wars. However, he identifies a contending form of prophetic narrative at work on the Left, which he calls the "progressive jeremiad." Bellamy is one of these progressive Jeremiahs who use a prophetic narrative of promise and chosen-ness to inspire political change in the direction of his ideal vision of American democracy. He tells a tale of an exceptional nation, special but imperfect, with a destiny to fulfill.³⁵ In his prophetic capacity, he calls together an audience to share his dream of a nation that has realized the promises enshrined by the sacred documents of its civil religion.

Chapter two indicates more clearly how Bellamy's political theology is compatible with this civil religion. Following Rorty, I treat this as a tradition that, while realistic about the ways in which our nation continuously falls short of our ideal images of it, sees always the possibilities for improvement, for actively working toward that ideal nonetheless. Through Bellamy's utopia we enter into pertinent conversations about the meaning of freedom, equality, solidarity, and democracy--the kinds of conversations that engaged the American public over the second half of the nineteenth century as the nation's economy was transitioning from primarily agricultural to primarily industrial. Strategically, Bellamy's narrative was effective at consolidating opposition

³⁵ I recognize, of course, that there are significant dangers attached to narratives of "American exceptionalism," narratives that are all too often used to justify policies of nativism at home and imperialism abroad. However, my intention with this dissertation is not to advocate for those narratives as the only possible ones, but to explore the discursive contexts that surround and inform Bellamy's story in particular.

to plutocratic capital because it spoke the language of civic republicanism as well as the early Dewey's democratic idealism.

I align Bellamy with what Alex Gourevitch terms, in his 2014 book *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*, labor republicanism. The labor republicans, according to Gourevitch's account, reinvented the meaning of civic freedom for the industrial era. Traditionally, republican theory conceives of freedom as a limited principle, where the freedom of some depends upon the unfreedom of others. The citizen was thought to be free because he was in control of others, namely non-citizens and slaves. But because the nature of industrial labor is irreducibly social, labor republicanism translates the traditional republican notion of freedom as self-determination into a principle of cooperative ownership. Thus, it transforms a limited concept of freedom, one predicated on domination, to a universal one that is consistent with full democratic equality. Gourevitch finds that the solution to the tension between individual liberty and democratic equality in the industrial era would necessarily resolve itself in a certain amount of statism. Bellamy takes the statist solution to its extreme with his industrial army and scheme of absolute economic equality. For him, a centralized democratic government is the only entity that can manage this kind of universalist project (though his system does admit for governing institutions at the regional, national, and even international levels). However, whether or not one agrees that republicanism must take a statist form in the modern era, I am arguing that the specific content of Bellamy's utopia is ultimately less important than the insights it provides into the political theology of solidarity.

Chapter three returns my argument to the broader theological discourse. It engages with Erich Fromm's characterization of Bellamy's utopianism as existing within a line of thought that

extends back through the Old Testament prophets. Fromm describes the impulse behind the universalist and collectivist demands of nineteenth century socialism as a theological impulse toward human atonement with the divine. Likewise, I engage with Paul Tillich's series of lectures on "The Political Meaning of Utopia," which offer a lens through which to understand utopia as a powerful reflection on the human condition. Tillich argues that utopia is a mythical re-presentation of human being's awareness of itself as "finite freedom"--as being that is simultaneously part of and estranged from universal being. Utopian symbols of eschatological expectation like the post-millennial concept of the kingdom of God on earth, and the prophetic narratives that unfold in support of them, stem from a fundamental desire to overcome existential estrangement and be reunited with being itself.

I use Tillich's work to develop similar themes in Bellamy's 1874 essay "The Religion of Solidarity." The essay, which was first published in 1940, appears to have been a reaction to his own private spiritual anxiety; but it also reflects a collective spiritual anxiety that followed in the wake of the Civil War, the rise of industrialization, and the decline of traditional religious affiliation. Just as Americans were desperate to fill the vacuum of meaning left in the nation's political imagination, Bellamy's essay attempts to relieve the pain of existential doubt by constructing an ontology that dissolves the powerless individual into a sea of universal being. He refuses to privilege the circumscribed, egoistic self, instead describing the human experience as one of a "dual life" which fluctuates between two planes--one personal, the other impersonal. Trading on a seemingly instinctual drive to identify with universal being rather than remain trapped by the dramas, tragedies, and narrow interests of the personality, he develops a notion of subjectivity that frees us from a habitual will-to-survival mode and clears a space where

contemplative reflection and self-determined action may supplant programmatic and reactive behavior. The implication is that one can deliberately cultivate the universal perspective as a catalyst for transforming the reactive and capricious self into an active, willful and, above all, free self.

My look at Bellamy demonstrates how utopian literature served during the labor struggles of the first Gilded Age as a tool of political subjectivization and mobilization, and how it could potentially do so again. The tremendous popularity of *Looking Backward* in its time meant that Bellamy's vision of radical equality and democratic solidarity spread far and fast, making a significant contribution to a set of discourses that ran counter to those that sustained the bourgeois ideologies of liberalism and conservatism alike. Ultimately it was the efficacy of these counter-discourses that enabled the Populist and Progressive movements to mount a real political fight against the power of the plutocracy. Rorty argues that today, as we find ourselves in the midst of a second Gilded Age, the Left has a strategic need for stories like these, which may have a role to play in countering the divisive rhetoric coming from the Right. Messages of hope, promise, and above all unity are crucial. Only by identifying and working in favor of our shared interests can we form the kind of coalitional movement that is capable of winning elections and effecting legislation for the common good.³⁶

The good news is that since the 2016 election, a powerful and accessible counter-discourse has emerged, at least in the alternative progressive media. The journal *Democracy* recently floated the idea of a "job guarantee" that would make the government the "employer of

³⁶ Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, 101.

last resort” for any American who desires work but cannot find it in the so-called private sector for whatever reason, and for those who can’t work, a basic universal income.³⁷ It also appears that Bernie Sanders and others have been able to gain significant support for a single-payer healthcare proposal. Sanders’s totally unprecedented and unexpected success in the 2016 Democratic primary has given many a reason to hope. A publicly avowed socialist and one of the most popular politicians in America, he is still making the rounds and meeting with constituents--not only his progressive supporters but also demographics that the Democratic establishment wrote off during the election as beyond persuasion, like West Virginia coal miners. In other words, he has continued to *do politics* because, as he says, “despair is not an option...the stakes are too high.”³⁸

However, the same thing continues to divide leftist and centrist Democrats that divided Bernie and Hillary supporters during the campaign. What the leftists continue to say that the centrists can’t--for fear of displeasing their corporate donors--is that if the party wants to win elections and pass legislation to protect the rights, liberties, and public goods of the American people then it is going to have to talk not only about race, gender and sexuality, but also about class. This is what Bellamy did so effectively: he countered the divide-and-conquer tactics of defenders of industrial capital with an ideal symbol of democratic solidarity, one predicated on the social nature of production and distribution in the industrial age. And now, unless we’re willing to accept a future in which politics is just a game played by billionaires, we would do well to counter the destructive effects of cynicism with constructive symbols of hopeful

³⁷ Jeff Spross, “You’re Hired!,” *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* 44 (Spring 2017): <http://democracyjournal.org/magazine/44/youre-hired/> (accessed March 31, 2017).

³⁸ Bernie Sanders in conversation with Josh Fox on *The Bernie Sanders Show*, April 19, 2017: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24-UaK6vpcQ> (accessed April 19, 2017).

expectation. We can do this by tapping into the long-standing political and theological myths that inspire and empower poor, working and middle-class people to oppose the despotic rule of the mega-rich. It has worked before and it can work again. As Bernie puts it, “anyone who says we can’t make change doesn’t know a damn thing about American history.”³⁹

³⁹ Bernie Sanders in conversation with Josh Fox on *The Bernie Sanders Show*, April 19, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24-UaK6vpcQ> (accessed April 19, 2017).

1

THE NEW AMERICAN MILLENNIUM:
REVIVALISM AND UTOPIA

On the heels of its Civil War, the (recently re-)United States of America was experiencing a profound crisis of identity. The young isolationist nation would quickly become a military and commercial world power over the course of the next half-century. In the Northeast, waves of Irish Catholic, German and Eastern European immigrants supplied a steady stream of cheap labor that supported the expansion of a new industrial economy, but posed a challenge to the cultural hegemony of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. Ultimately, the mobility of labor made it an expendable resource, which contributed to exploding wealth disparities between the poor and working classes and the ownership class. By the 1870s, Tocqueville's America, the communities of which were more or less economically homogenous,⁴⁰ was not a reality for many urban dwellers, laborers, immigrants and others at the lower end of the income spectrum. The last several decades of the nineteenth century were characterized by increased economic inequality and pervasive political corruption. Under the harsh conditions of unregulated industrial capitalism, working class individuals were objectified, demeaned, and exploited. They were forced into depraved conditions and then told, like slaves before them, that it was their own base

⁴⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: Volume I* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), lxviii. At the outset, Tocqueville notes: "during my stay in the United States, nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of social conditions...the more I advanced in the study of American society, the more I perceived that the equality of conditions is the fundamental fact from which all others seem to be derived, and the central point at which all my observations constantly terminated." This analysis takes New England as the model and excludes the South.

natures which kept them from full and equal civic participation. Mark Twain famously described this era as America's "Gilded Age," referring to the way in which elite ostentation obscured from view the very different, and very desperate, experiences of the working classes.⁴¹ The ultra-rich were consuming conspicuously while laborers were struggling to survive under exploitative and unsafe working conditions. And while property ownership had sustained the promise of equality and self-determination for generations of Americans, the rapid increase in urbanization and industrialization over the second half of the nineteenth century meant that that hope had become unattainable for much of the population.

Born in 1850, Edward Bellamy grew up witnessing first-hand the environmental and human costs of industrialization as it spread through his hometown of Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. After decades of drifting through careers in law, journalism, and literature, at the age of 38 he met with remarkable, if unexpected, success with the publication of *Looking Backward*. This novel (along with its 1898 sequel *Equality*) centers around an affluent young Bostonian at the height of the Gilded Age. Having trouble sleeping, Julian West seeks the help of a mesmerist who hypnotizes him into a sleep so deep that it lasts for 113 years. When he wakes in the year 2000, he finds himself in the home of a man called Dr. Leete. After speaking with the doctor and his family, Julian learns that his beloved Boston, along with the rest of the United States, has undergone a total political and economic revolution. Through detailed dialogues between Julian and his hosts, Bellamy shares economic and historical details of the new republic. Industry has been fully nationalized and brought under the control of democratic government. Wage-labour has been abolished. Every man, woman and child is now entitled to

⁴¹ *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* was a novel written in 1873 by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner.

an equal share in the collective wealth of the nation. Of course, it is also expected that each contributes to the production of said wealth in whatever way they are most capable. Those who are not capable will still have their needs taken care of and will be treated with the same dignity as any citizen, for that is the meaning of solidarity.

Bellamy envisions a utopian “brotherhood of man” in which the socialist revolution has wiped away the greatest obstacles to human happiness. His mission was to show his audience that there is a way to live together that doesn’t involve domination and exploitation--to show them that we are limited only by our imagination and political will. This was a response to the social and ideological failures of liberal capitalism as it was wreaking havoc on long-standing institutions of American democracy. In *Equality*, which was published only months before his death in 1898, Bellamy describes the consequences of post-war industrialization on the American psyche. Before the war, he says,

[r]iches or poverty, the condition of being at leisure or obliged to work were considered merely temporary accidents of fortune and not permanent conditions. All this was now changed. The great fortunes of the new order of things by their very magnitude were stable acquisitions, not easily liable to be lost, capable of being handed down from generation to generation with almost as much security as a title of nobility. On the other hand, the monopolization of all the valuable economic opportunities in the country by the great capitalists made it correspondingly impossible for those not of the capitalist class to attain wealth. The hope of becoming rich some day, which before the war every energetic American had cherished, was no practically beyond the horizon of the man born to poverty. Between rich and poor the door was henceforth shut. The way up, hitherto the social safety valve, had been closed, and the bar weighted with money bags.”⁴²

Bellamy observes that under the structural oppression of industrial capitalism the average citizen’s optimism had turned to cynicism. Achievements that had once seemed possible through hard work and persistence, now seemed altogether impossible.

In the introduction I argued that certain discourses thrive within the frame of a cynical or fatalistic worldview. As we will see in detail in chapter two below, bourgeois liberalism

⁴² Edward Bellamy, *Equality* (1897; repr., New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 322.

advanced a powerful narrative that in the last instance retreats into the individual and rationalizes mass suffering as justified if not inevitable, thus discouraging political action. Bellamy's voice was one in a chorus of collectivist responses to that narrative. He was part of a significant counter-discourse predicated on a belief that the success of the American democratic project would depend on a solidarity that transcends boundaries of class, gender, race, and creed. What this chapter will do is put his utopianism into historical context and demonstrate how, as a symbol of a collective ideal, it was able to focus disparate energies and inspire political action on the part of those who shared his faith in a better world to come.

The chapter begins by demonstrating how post-millennialism is an important theological forerunner to the kind of progress ideologies at the heart of both liberal democratic and socialist ideals of society and government. American scholars of religion and politics recognize an important fact: that our political discourse is soaked in a distinctive history of religiosity. A useful way to think about this is to realize that we can understand our civic ideals as descending from or being secularizations of particular theological frameworks, on the one hand; or, on the other, we can understand the theological frameworks themselves as a spiritualization of new civic formations. My project conveniently leaves unresolved the question of whether our political categories are theological or our theological categories are political, recognizing that even now in the twenty-first century these things cannot effectively be disentangled. In this chapter I proceed in the direction from theology to politics by contextualizing the theological background of Bellamy's work. In the next chapter I begin with politics and political economy, thinking through the discourses of Bellamy and his contemporaries in the other direction.

As post-millennial theology gained popularity in America throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its imperative to prepare the world for Christ's second coming catalyzed a number of public reform efforts focused on ridding communities of vice. Then, amidst the turmoil of the Gilded Age, workers learned how to organize around their material interest. Eventually, religious and labor reform efforts would often meet under the "Progressive" banner. Bellamy's utopian socialism is especially indicative of these alliances insofar as it displays explicitly millennial elements in both its language and narrative structure, but combines them with elements of a more European scientific materialism that grows out of a critique of capitalist political economy. I frame the political movement inspired by *Looking Backward* as a "secular revivalism" because it follows in the tradition of religious revival as it developed during America's First and Second Great Awakenings. I do not use the term secular to imply non-religiosity here; rather I use it in the same way that Richard Rorty does, as I stated in the introduction, to refer to a familiar tradition of democratic idealism that expects to see the nation fulfill the "sacred" promises enshrined in its founding documents.

It is his blurring of the lines between politics and theology, where an earthly utopia essentially stands in for the Biblical kingdom of God, that compels me to situate Bellamy within a long tradition of prophetic political speech in America. Prophetic narratives motivate political action by providing symbols of expectation around which collective subjectivities cohere, allowing common interests to be recognized and pursued. Bellamy relies on the same exceptionalist narrative of promise and chosen-ness that informs what Andrew Murphy (in an expansion of Sacvan Bercovitch's pioneering work on the Puritan jeremiad) calls the "progressive" jeremiad. Bellamy's message is that we are a special but imperfect nation with a

destiny that must be fulfilled. Ultimately, the enduring belief in American exceptionalism, and the various narratives of progress that sustain it, stem from an even older interpretation of Christian doctrine, which is why the story starts there.

From Millennium to Progress

In *Millennialism and Utopia*, Ernest Lee Tuveson argues that the dominance of progress narratives during the nineteenth century owes more to the theological innovations of the Reformation than to the material and scientific advances of the Renaissance.⁴³ “Millennialism” is a term with deep roots in Christian theology, originally referring to the idea that following his second coming Christ would reign over an earthly kingdom for the period of one thousand years immediately preceding the Final Judgment. This conviction, known as “*pre-millennialism*,” insists that it is beyond our power as humans to improve the manifest world; only the return of Christ can save humanity from its inevitable, and evident, deterioration. Pre-millennialism was the dominant attitude of the Medieval Church, but with the Reformation came a re-interpretation of the message of the Book of Revelation. According to Tuveson, by the late-16th century we begin to see a convergence of religious/apocalyptic theories of history with emerging theories of the natural sciences, which were considerably more optimistic about the possibilities for human progress (and more flexible about eschatological timing).⁴⁴ Theologians began to conceive of

⁴³ Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennialism and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress* (1949; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 75.

⁴⁴ Tuveson, *Millennialism*, 75. Tuveson explains that by the end of the 16th century, “the possibility of progress...had been demonstrated; it remained for the seventeenth century to turn *possibility* into *certainty*; the cyclical was to become teleological” (69-70). “Thus it was that the Apocalypse, which at the beginning of the Reformation seemed only to augur a dark future for humanity, became, with the assistance of a new scientific philosophy of universal law, and encouraged by the great advances of knowledge of nature, the very guarantee and assurance of progress” (152).

history as the corporeal playing out of human progress toward an Apocalyptic Golden Age. The belief that this Golden Age would *precede* the return of Christ in the form of an earthly utopia was called post-millennialism. Post-millennialists believe that it is within human power to improve the human condition, and that history and experience provide confirmation of our evolution as individuals and as a society. Both pre- and post-millennial theologies are rooted in readings of Revelation. Despite their differences, both narratives imagine a utopian stage within historical time when the “servants of God” will rule.⁴⁵ However, because premillennialism interprets Revelation 20 literally, its heavenly utopia comes only on the heels of an earthly dystopia. The expectation that “when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison” does little to inspire a hopeful view of humanity’s collective future, instead encouraging believers to turn toward Christ and away from mundane matters. Therefore, premillennialism traditionally didn’t do much to inspire political engagement. It was not until the early twentieth century that a critical mass of American Christians, known then as reactionary “fundamentalists,” would launch a revival of premillennial eschatology and enter strategically into the political arena.⁴⁶

While premillennialism structures the worldview of fundamentalist evangelicalism in America to this day, Stephen J. Stein notes in his 2010 chapter on “Millennialism,” that

⁴⁵ Tuveson, *Millennialism*, 9.

⁴⁶ The relevant pieces of Revelation 20 read as follows according to the translation in the New International Version: “And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the keys to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time” (1-3). “When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth-- Gog and Magog--and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever” (7-10).

postmillennialism “is a term rarely used today,” as it “has morphed into social progress rather than a literal eschatological concept.”⁴⁷ Theodore Olson, whose 1982 study *Millennialism, Utopianism, and Progress* traces the intellectual influence of popular millennial and utopian sources on the concept of progress, says that “these folk-traditions are powerful because they are pervasive; they can be appealed to as ‘what everybody knows’; they can mobilize people, demand sacrifices, and provide coherence to the apparently conflicting demands faced by ordinary people.” Even when leaders make political appeals, he explains, “what is often heard and acted upon is the call to achieve the kingdom of God.”⁴⁸ This is why preachers and theologians were some of the earliest and most influential generators of political discourse in America.

Jonathan Edwards is considered among the most defining, if not *the* most defining, of these early voices. One millenarian scholar calls Edwards “the first American postmillennialist of stature,” claiming that “his views, when amplified and redirected in subsequent generations, resulted in what can only be called a radical departure in eschatology.”⁴⁹ His great innovation was to argue that the divine process of redemption was being carried out on the earthly plane through the observable advancement of ages. In a series of sermons published posthumously as *A History of the Work of Redemption* he outlines humanity’s collective movement toward the eternal “kingdom of Christ”:

⁴⁷ Stephen J. Stein, “Millennialism,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Religion in America*, ed. Philip Goff (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 223.

⁴⁸ Theodore Olson, *Millennialism, Utopianism, and Progress* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 4.

⁴⁹ David E. Smith, “Millenarian Scholarship in America,” *American Quarterly* 17, 3 (Fall 1965): 539.

[T]here are several stages of the accomplishment of the kingdom of Christ, so in each one of them the event is accomplished in a further degree than in the foregoing. That in Constantine's time [was] much greater than [that which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem]. So that the kingdom of Christ is gradually prevailing and increasing by these several great stages of its fulfillment from the time of Christ's resurrection to the end of the world.⁵⁰

History becomes a narrative of progress toward the realization of the kingdom of heaven on earth. Edwards weds the finite dimensions of time and space to the dimension of infinite perfection. As we will see in chapter three this is the essence of any utopia--a symbol of both the estranged condition of human existence and the subsequent desire to overcome that estrangement by experiencing connection with divine or universal being.

Edwards' "kingdom of Christ" represents a sort of divine transcendence, but its fulfillment comes through God's grace manifesting itself gradually through the activities of actual individuals and nations:

[T]his is a work which will be accomplished by means, by the preaching of the gospel, and the use of the ordinary means of grace, and so shall be gradually brought to pass. Some shall be converted and be the means of others' conversion; God's Spirit shall be poured out, first to raise up instruments, and then those instruments shall improved and succeeded. And doubtless one nation shall be enlightened and converted after another, one false religion and false way of worship exploded after another.⁵¹

This kind of active narrative is especially politically effective because it compels an audience to act out in the world according to its utopian expectation. In this case it is one's faith in the coming kingdom of Christ that compels one to seek to remake the world in accordance with that image.

Edwards was one of the leading lights of America's First Great Awakening, a period of religious fervor lasting from approximately 1720 to 1750 which revolved around the attempt made by the pastorate to rekindle faith in the face of waning religious enthusiasm amongst

⁵⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption: Vol. 9 of The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed. John F. Wilson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 354.

⁵¹ Edwards, *Work of Redemption*, 459.

settled and increasingly worldly generations of Americans.⁵² He and other popular preachers of this era, most notably George Whitefield who traveled throughout the colonies delivering a series of influential sermons in 1740, “provided the ordinary citizen with a historical philosophy” in a way that other civic leaders of the day were incapable of doing.⁵³ Edwards’s sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” is paradigmatic of a genre of political speech that Sacvan Bercovitch famously identifies with the period. Bercovitch’s pioneering work on the “American jeremiad” reveals the affinities between the content of these sermons and the message of the Old-Testament prophet Jeremiah, who prophesied the fall of God’s chosen nation, Judah, attributing it to the Judahites’ rejection of their covenant with the Lord due to their failure to obey Him. In the American version Puritan evangelists idealized the founding settler generation, pointing to their holiness as proof of this nation’s “chosenness.” They would then condemn the contemporary generation as a lot of degenerate and remorseless sinners, calling on them to repent, to mend their ways and return to the righteous path of the chosen, lest they as a people lose the favor of the Lord.

In his study of Edwards’ life and work, Perry Miller explains how when the New England clergy felt they were losing control of their governments they began to hold “periodic demonstrations, [wherein] days of communal owning became catharses of social anxieties.” There was “a confession in unison and a public purgation of conscience, [which was] something totally foreign to the private soul-searching of Puritanism.”⁵⁴ This was the birth of revivalism, which historian Robert Fuller estimates to be “the single most distinctive institution in the history

⁵² Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (1949; repr., Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2005).

⁵³ Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America’s Millennial Role* (1968; repr., Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 54.

⁵⁴ Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 135.

of American religion.” While revivalism extended “the basic model of religious conversion that Puritans had long held as the core of authentic spirituality,” it was unique insofar as the moral authority of its preachers came in many cases “not from formal training but from their personal power of persuasion.” Revival, says Fuller, is an emotional brand of preaching meant to “heighten people’s sense of sin, bring them to a crisis of conscience, and finally lead them to repentance and a heartfelt commitment to a new life in Christ.”⁵⁵ This rhetorical strategy generates demand by bringing a particular frame of past and future to bear on the present moment. It guides individuals to see themselves as agents in a struggle greater than themselves, one that is simultaneously personal and political. Under the right circumstances this can elicit an acute emotional response from individuals who suddenly find themselves, unworthy sinners that they are, burdened with the full weight of an eternal battle between good and evil. The ultimate objective of all this is to channel that anxiety into a renewed commitment to the community.

It was the public aspect of revivalist practice, the shared confession and conversion experiences, that really opened up new spaces and opportunities for civil discourse. Timothy L. Smith explains in *Revivalism and Social Reform* that the mass conversions of this era expanded and invigorated the destinarian vision of postmillennial eschatology.⁵⁶

the [first] Great Awakening created a sense of national consciousness that would prepare the colonists for the impending push toward independence from England. The Great Awakening popularized a rhetoric of liberty, a conviction that true authority rested in personal conscience rather than in established authority....It further gave the colonists a sense of special destiny, a confidence that they were somehow preparing the world for a more complete establishment of a kingdom of God on earth.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Robert C. Fuller, *Religious Revolutionaries: The Rebels Who Reshaped American Religion* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 25-6.

⁵⁶ Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 8.

⁵⁷ Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, 30.

Revivals would broaden and intensify the influence of evangelism upon the developing civic imagination of Americans, doing a good deal to reinforce collective consciousness around national identity by turning expectations about historical progress into shared mythologies and political demands.

Even more than the first, the Second Great Awakening was a catalyst for public efforts to rectify vice and injustice. The theological consensus among Edwards and his contemporaries was that conversion was an act of God that could not be brought about by human efforts, but this began to change around the turn of the nineteenth century when Yale theologians like Timothy Dwight and Nathaniel Taylor started preaching that human beings had the capacity to “quit sinning and make ourselves again worthy of God’s grace.”⁵⁸ A number of Edwards’ students and associates—including Lyman Beecher, Samuel Hopkins, even Edward Bellamy’s own great-grandfather Joseph Bellamy--would also become influential leaders of the Second Great Awakening, which is thought to have peaked somewhere between 1800 and 1830.

While intellectual leadership played an important role in the way political and theological narratives evolved over time, James Moorhead, a historian of the American Church at Princeton Theological Seminary, credits the lay members of Protestant congregations for establishing an early “grass-roots” movement in America during the First and Second Great Awakenings by “promoting revivals, organizing voluntary associations, and using the instruments of mass persuasion.”

⁵⁸ Fuller, *Religious Revolutionaries*, 61.

Voluntarism was more than a theological construct or an idea imported from Enlightened thinkers. It reflected Protestants' experience of a new form of social organization. Whether through a Methodist class meeting or in the fellowship of a 'revived' church of the New England establishment, the convert found himself associating with others on a new basis....Faced with frequent opposition to the awakenings, evangelicals learned to their sorrow that the accidents of location, birth, or learning did not automatically create soulmates. The redeemed congregated because they shared a similar spiritual rebirth and a devotion to the same tasks. Their common status as forgiven sinners implied egalitarianism,...evangelicalism also created a sense of participation in a vast movement transcending local boundaries.⁵⁹

Revivalist circles were where many community-building strategies took root, as political values were refined within the context of religious experience. Smith says that “far from disdaining earthly affairs, the evangelists played a key role in the widespread attack on slavery, poverty, and greed.” It was the “quest of personal holiness” that “geared ancient creeds to the drive shaft of social reform.”⁶⁰ The emphasis was on a personal responsibility that also entailed a commitment “to work toward the moral renovation of society” in expectation of Christ’s return.⁶¹

Revivalists of this era succeeded in bringing to life the principles they professed. They established cohesive and egalitarian communities that thrived on the enthusiastic participation of individuals who saw themselves as invested in a collective struggle for the future. Bellamy gives a nod to the political power of revivalism in *Equality* when, as part of his fictional account of the transition from capitalism to socialism, he refers to a period called “The Great Revival.” He describes “a tide of enthusiasm for the social, not the personal, salvation, and for the establishment in brotherly love of the kingdom of God on earth which Christ bade men hope and work for.”⁶² In a piece exploring Bellamy’s religious influences, George E. Connor reveals that his millennialism bears a close resemblance to that of revivalist preachers of the Second Great

⁵⁹ James H. Moorhead, “Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880,” *The Journal of American History* 71, 3 (December 1984), 529-30.

⁶⁰ Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*, 8.

⁶¹ Fuller, *Religious Revolutionaries*, 66-7.

⁶² Bellamy, *Equality*, 344.

Awakening, in particular that of Charles Grandison Finney. Finney was one of the most important evangelists of this era, a champion of abolitionism and racial and gender equality who brought the fires of revival to urban centers up and down the East Coast. Connor points to four crucial doctrinal similarities between Finney and Bellamy, positing that Finney's belief in 1) "the innate goodness of human beings," 2) the perfectibility of man and his world, 3) "multi- or cross-denominational revivalism," and 4) the necessity of feminist reform, anticipates Bellamy's worldview as he expresses it in *Looking Backward* and *Equality*.⁶³ Whether or not Finney directly influenced Bellamy, the consistency of their ideas reflects the common theological heritage of political and religious reform efforts.

Though religious revivalism is motivated first and foremost by theological concerns, it has a history of political influence. As I argued above, what bridges any gap between the two worlds is the social progress narrative of post-millennialism. Bellamy straddles this already blurry line by employing the language and imagery of a revivalist preacher in service of a secular democratic ideal. It isn't only his emotional rhetoric that invites the comparison to revivalism though; it is also the extensive impact that his narrative had on public discourse and on practices of civic organization. The ideological influence of *Looking Backward* was so powerful that following its 1888 publication a host of Bellamy-inspired Nationalist clubs sprang up around the country, even as far away as Canada, England, and New Zealand.⁶⁴ A monthly club newspaper called the *Nationalist* began publication in May of 1889; by December of that same year, *Looking Backward* had sold 210,000 copies and the *Nationalist* 69,000. The trend developed

⁶³ George E. Connor, "The Awakening of Edward Bellamy," *Utopian Studies* 11, 1 (2000): 43-47.

⁶⁴ Howard Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement* (1953; repr., Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 82.

quickly and by November of 1890 there were 158 clubs (California and New York City having the highest concentrations with 65 and 16 clubs, respectively); February of 1891 saw the peak with a total of 165 Nationalist clubs having been established in the United States.⁶⁵ The principal mission, and the principal success, of these clubs was their proselytism. Through the propagation of lectures, books, articles, magazines, and newspapers they popularized Bellamy's message of political and spiritual solidarity.

It makes sense to frame Bellamy's work and the movement it inspired in terms of secular revival because much like the revivalist preachers who couched their political demands in narratives of eternal battles between good and evil, the rhetoric of Nationalism employed a blend of religious and martial symbolism. In his book *The Forging of American Socialism*, historian Howard Quint says that while their political platform was focused on immediate material demands, the Nationalists "initiated their drive for economic and social salvation with the evangelical fervor of missionaries seeking new converts." The Boston-based publication *The Nationalist* proclaimed, "It is a holy war, which we, who begin the struggle, must wage as a sacred duty."⁶⁶

To this point, Wilfred McClay claims that "for Bellamy, war honored the noblest, most self-sacrificial, least pecuniary motives animating human beings."⁶⁷ Bellamy revealed just how integral the modern military organizational model was to his vision for a socialist economy, writing in an 1890 article for *The Nationalist* that it was "the destined cornerstone of the new

⁶⁵ John Hope Franklin, "Edward Bellamy and the Nationalist Movement," *The New England Quarterly* 11, 4 (December 1938), 752-4.

⁶⁶ Quint, *American Socialism*, 82. Quint describes the manifesto of the Nationalist Club of Boston as a blend of "the ethical, mystical, other-worldly Theosophist social thought of Helen Blavatsky" and "the gas-and-sewage immersed Fabian Socialist economic theory of Sidney Webb" (81).

⁶⁷ Wilfred M. McClay, "Edward Bellamy and the Politics of Meaning," *American Scholar* 64, 2 (Spring 1995): 266.

social order.”⁶⁸ But despite its martial tone, Bellamy’s industrial army (which will be unpacked in greater detail in the next chapter) was an attempt to channel the potentially divisive and destructive energies of tribalism and militarism toward a greater and common good. He explicitly rejected the ethno-chauvinistic connotations that the term Nationalism carried even in his own time, reclaiming and redefining it as the ideal of “economic democracy.”⁶⁹ He claims to have chosen the name because it, more precisely than any other, indicated how his brand of collectivism “places the whole subject of industrial and social reform upon a broad National basis, viewing it not from the position or with the prejudices of any one group of men, but from the ground of a common citizenship, humanity and morality.”⁷⁰

To avoid stirring up animosity and sowing further discord among Americans, Bellamy hesitated to assign personal blame, insisting in an 1889 address to the Boston Nationalist club that “we are animated by no sentiment of bitterness toward individuals or classes.” He tells a story in which the enemy is not a class enemy, but the corrupted political and economic structure itself and the way it manifests within and among members to perpetuate a cycle of oppression. Rather than alienate powerful segments of the population, he treated the social turmoil of the late-nineteenth century as the product of systemic and structural defects rather than moral ones. Even the insatiable and devastating greed of the industrial capitalists was learned behavior,

⁶⁸ McClay, “Politics of Meaning,” 265.

⁶⁹ Edward Bellamy, “The Programme of the Nationalists,” *The Forum*, March 1894 (repr., in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975), 151.

⁷⁰ Edward Bellamy, “Looking Forward,” *The Nationalist*, December 1889 (repr., in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975), 176. Ultimately, Bellamy’s vision extended beyond the nation. He imagined an international federation of nations, cooperative among themselves but almost totally self-sufficient within. International tourism is up, he says, and international trade is down. This institutional schema is consistent with his theological universalism, his belief in a “human brotherhood.”

which is why “in antagonizing the money power we antagonize not men but a system.”⁷¹ Even in choosing the name Nationalism Bellamy was consciously distancing himself from the class-struggle thesis, which was central to many of the European theories of socialism that were being rapidly imported into American cities by waves of working-class immigrants. Quint says that *Looking Backward* appealed especially to “humanitarian-minded members of the urban middle class who, by the late 1880’s were becoming visibly alarmed at the grasping tycoons of finance and industry and by the militant leaders of organized labor.”⁷² Unlike their European counterparts middle-class Americans were “reared in a tradition of equality of opportunity” and so “could not think in terms of the class struggle, let alone accept it as a law of history.” In general, they believed that an “appeal to the interests of a single class...showed pettiness of outlook and a lack of faith in man’s intrinsic goodness.”⁷³ Bellamy spoke directly to this sentiment.

Indeed, the Nationalist clubs drew a relatively bourgeois crowd. The club in Portsmouth, New Hampshire was organized by a merchant, an iron worker, and a librarian⁷⁴; the Chicago club was “composed of ‘lawyers, bank officers, merchants, and other people of the middle class.’” Quint’s archival work demonstrates that the Chicago club’s May 1889 meeting “was held at the Palmer House, and admission was by written invitation only.”⁷⁵ It might be argued that the class composition of the clubs limited the movement’s effectiveness as revival, that by

⁷¹ Edward Bellamy, “Nationalism--Principles, Purposes,” public address, December 19, 1889 (repr., in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975), 62.

⁷² Quint, *American Socialism*, 79.

⁷³ Quint, *American Socialism*, 87.

⁷⁴ Franklin, “Nationalist Movement,” 752.

⁷⁵ Quint, *American Socialism*, 85.

catering to the middle class Nationalism excluded the populist politics of the poor and people of color. Perhaps this is why Bellamy himself seemed to have preferred pure pedagogy to “the club method.”⁷⁶ Although the original club--which was founded in Boston in October of 1888--elected Bellamy its first vice-president, his involvement in the clubs was tangential and not central to his effort. Whatever the reason, without his coordinated leadership Nationalism had all but exhausted its momentum by 1894. As Quint explains it the movement “exploded in all directions at the same time....Its energies were never channelized.”⁷⁷ In spite of its wide readership, the *Nationalist* had been an immediate and continuing financial loss; it was forced to cease publication in January of 1891, whereupon it was replaced by a weekly periodical under Bellamy’s direct editorship called the *New Nation*.⁷⁸ Finally, in the spring of 1891, the Nationalists would attempt to engage in direct political participation for the first time. In Rhode Island they presented candidates for governor and lieutenant-governor and published a party platform; the California Nationalists, likewise, ran candidates in two of six congressional districts and met with little success, receiving 1.25% of the vote.⁷⁹

This War is Ours

Although one might attribute Nationalism’s failure to its lack of connection to militant working-class movements and lack of coordinated leadership, Bellamy’s very American didactic

⁷⁶ Franklin, “Nationalist Movement,” 751.

⁷⁷ Quint, *American Socialism*, 101.

⁷⁸ Franklin, “Nationalist Movement,” 761. The *New Nation* too experienced a brief run, publishing its final edition only three years later in February, 1894 (770). Franklin notes that during Bellamy’s time as editor of the *New Nation* (which succeeded the *Nationalist*) “he gave very little space to news of the clubs,” and in April 1891, quit printing it altogether (764).

⁷⁹ Franklin, “Nationalist Movement,” 765.

and domesticated universalism might account for a broad, longer term success in terms of its helping to steer the transformation of Gilded Age America. It is the message of solidarity and common interest that gives his narrative such appeal; and his political inclusivity, I argue, is a product of his theological universalism. This blurring of lines was natural for Bellamy who in an early essay called “The Religion of Solidarity”--which we will unpack in chapter three--suggests that feelings of patriotism and religiosity share a common origin in “the instinct of an identity of oneness.”⁸⁰ On the other hand, as finite beings, he says we also experience an instinctual sense of loss, a sense of insurmountable separateness from the original unity of being; our life experiences, then, revolve around attempts to reconcile this loss through connection with others and through the creation of common meaning.⁸¹ (As we will see in chapter three, this amounts to an existential interpretation of the Biblical narrative of fall and redemption--one of the world’s oldest and most recognizable symbols of utopian expectation.) Bellamy places ultimate value on personal connection with divinity--and celebration of our *own* divinity--rather than on ritual or priestly mediation. He speaks of the human “passion for losing ourselves in others or for absorbing them into ourselves”; “the most insatiable love of loves,” he says, “is that of an individual for his remnant, the universe. This is the love of god by whatever name men may choose to call it.”⁸²

⁸⁰ Edward Bellamy, “The Religion of Solidarity,” in *The Religion of Solidarity* (New York: Concord Grove Press, 1984), 22.

⁸¹ Bellamy’s account of the instinctual feeling of loss in response to an original perception of oneness with all being resonates with Freud’s explanation for the origins of religion as he treats it in *Future of an Illusion* (1927) and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). Freud locates the source of the feeling in an “oceanic feeling,” which he associates with the pre-oedipal state when an infant is incapable of distinguishing between herself and the world outside of herself.

⁸² Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 19.

According to Joseph Schiffman, a scholar of Bellamy's religious thought, this essay, which he wrote as a young man in 1874, "opens a path, leading from transcendentalism to the utopianism of *Looking Backward*." Schiffman describes it as "strongly reminiscent of Emerson, Whitman, and, particularly, Henry James Senior." Like these thinkers, he says, Bellamy "celebrated love of the human race as the essence of the religious spirit."⁸³ It was probably Bellamy's idiosyncratic universalism that attracted a curiously large number of spiritualists and Theosophists to the Nationalist movement. Theosophy was a society founded by the enigmatic Russian transplant "Madame" Helena Blavatsky that promoted an esoteric and pantheistic religious philosophy. In her book *Women and American Socialism* historian Mari Jo Buhle reveals that "religious mysticism had proved--as had spiritualism among many women participants in the First International--a touchstone for Nationalist (and later Socialist) women." In Boston--"and conspicuously among members of Bellamy's immediate family," Buhle says--Theosophy proved quite popular among Nationalists or, rather, Nationalism proved quite popular amongst Theosophists (Buhle says that Blavatsky specifically steered her followers toward the clubs). But Theosophy did more than furnish the "anti-dogmatic dogma" which sat at a radical edge of Nationalism's spiritual backdrop; on a practical level, it also helped to organize a somewhat disparate scene on the political Left. In California, for example, Katherine Tingley, who had been a reform leader in New York before becoming Blavatsky's deputy, founded a Theosophist-Nationalist utopian colony near San Diego.⁸⁴

Although Theosophy and Nationalism would ultimately part ways, Buhle's survey of these connections reveals other direct relationships between Bellamy and the leaders of some of

⁸³ Joseph Schiffman, "Edward Bellamy's Religious Thought," *PMLA* 68, 4 (September 1953): 721.

⁸⁴ Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism: 1870-1920* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 78-9.

the most politically salient reform movements of late-19th century America, including Christian temperance groups as well as various native and immigrant-organized women's Socialist associations. Notably, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, author of *Women and Economics* and a contemporary of Bellamy's, spent some time as a lecturer at a Nationalist Club in California.⁸⁵ Frances Willard, president of the enormously influential Woman's Christian Temperance Union, held a vision of "a worldly, almost materialistic vision of heaven on earth achieved through women's initiative,"⁸⁶ which resonated so thoroughly with Bellamy's utopia that upon reading *Looking Backward*, "She proclaimed it 'a revelation' and an 'Evangel.'" Buhle says that Willard, who was previously unfamiliar with his work, "wrote to her personal secretary that 'Edward Bellamy must be *Edwardina*, 'because only 'a great-hearted, big-brained woman' could have written such a sensitive book." So profoundly did she agree with his message that "She proclaimed Nationalism the way out of the wilderness for women, and through her mankind."⁸⁷

For Willard, "Nationalism was the 'Socialism of Christ, the Golden Rule in action,'"⁸⁸ and the fact that in *Equality* Bellamy refers to his utopia as "The Republic of the Golden Rule" leaves little room for doubt that his political demands were a reflection of his universalist Christianity. Bellamy, whose father was a Baptist minister and mother a practicing Calvinist, gave up organized religion as a relatively young man and remained unaffiliated throughout his adult life. He was uninterested in the kind of doctrinal squabbles that he thought tended to

⁸⁵ Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, 79.

⁸⁶ Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, 64.

⁸⁷ Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, 80. Bellamy clearly agreed with Willard on this point. Take, for instance, a passage from *Equality* on the changed condition of woman-kind in which he asserts that "the establishment of economic equality seems to have meant far more for women than for men," that "if to the men the voice of the Revolution was a call to a higher and nobler plane of living, to woman it was as the voice of God calling her to a new creation" (143-4).

⁸⁸ Buhle, *Women and American Socialism*, 143-4.

occupy theologians and sow division among believers. He was, however, quite concerned with the sincerity of personal belief and the willingness to live one's values out in the world. To this effect, Schiffman relays a statement from Bellamy's son Paul:

“He commented as he read [scripture], and always emphasized the social and humanistic side of the teachings of Jesus. He used to tell us how he was quite sure that the all-important thing was how we treated our fellow men....He said that the reason he did not want us to go to church was because he felt the church failed to put the emphasis on religion where it belonged, namely on the translation of the Golden Rule into human relations; that it sang constantly about the glories of Heaven and did not denounce or attempt to correct evil and wickedness here below.”⁸⁹

The way he saw it, the energy and effort spent arguing amongst ourselves could be better spent working together to bring about a happier and more equitable future for all.

It is no surprise then that Bellamy endorses an anti-denominationalist trend in American religious life as part of his vision of political and economic solidarity. In *Equality* Julian West explains to his hosts that for many in the late-nineteenth century church, attendance had become more “a matter of family tradition and social propriety” than of genuine religious zeal. As he perceived it, “not one in many hundreds [of preachers] was a person who had anything to utter really worth hearing.”⁹⁰ By contrast, in Bellamy's imagined America, individuals have stopped going to church altogether, choosing instead to utilize technology to listen to sermons in the privacy of their own homes. In the post-revolutionary world any person with a message may preach. The public judges the worthiness of their messages simply by choosing to listen or not. His assumption was that as church attendance becomes a thing of the past, so would mediocre pastorship and sectarian alliances. Mr. Barton, who briefs Julian on the spiritual habits of twenty-first-century Bostonians, explains how

⁸⁹ Schiffman, “Edward Bellamy's Religious Thought,” 728.

⁹⁰ Bellamy, *Equality*, 264-5.

with a high grade of intelligence become universal the world was bound to outgrow the ceremonial side of religion, which with its forms and symbols, its holy times and places, its sacrifices, feasts, fasts, and new moons, meant so much in the child-time of the race. The time has now fully come which Christ foretold in that talk with the woman by the well of Samaria when the idea of the Temple and all it stood for would give place to the wholly spiritual religion, without respect of times or places, which he declared most pleasing to God.⁹¹

For Bellamy, the move toward a religion that is both universal and wholly personal is indicative of the spiritual evolution of humankind. But this can come only after certain battles have been won. Until then, there remains an unresolved tension between the political need to name enemies in order to consolidate opposition and the theological desire to move beyond that need.

Bellamy's theological universalism trades on a gospel of American exceptionalism that is the legacy of the Puritan Jeremiad. But unlike the Puritans, who lament the nation's fall from grace, Bellamy's narrative is one of sacred promise. In his 2008 book *Prodigal Nation*, Andrew Murphy expands on Sacvan Bercovitch's work on the traditional American jeremiad, distinguishing it in another form, which he calls the "progressive jeremiad." Like the traditional form, the progressive jeremiad utilizes a prophetic narrative to mobilize collective demand in support of a particular political agenda; but instead of telling a story of decline from perfection, it tells a story of progress toward it. It too assigns "chosen" status to the American democratic experiment, but this time it emphasizes the promises which are yet to be fulfilled. It paints a picture in which our ideals and our realities are at odds, in which history has made us bearers of an unbearable hypocrisy, which must be rectified.

Murphy's thesis accounts for the successful use of jeremiadic rhetoric as a tool of political mobilization on both the Right and the Left, historically. He notes that the two types of jeremiad have long been pitted against one another as weapons in a "culture war"--a struggle over what will be the central narrative of American national identity. As we saw in the

⁹¹ Bellamy, *Equality*, 267.

introduction, this culture wars narrative itself has come to provide the basic structure of contemporary American political discourse. Conservative and progressive Jeremiahs offer up competing stories in the effort to make sense of the nation's suffering and to marshal popular support for their own political ambitions.⁹² What their narratives have in common though is a characteristic triadic movement: first, they "identify problems that show a decline vis-a-vis the past"; second, they "identify turning points" in order to answer the question "When and why did the nation begin to go so wrong?"; and finally, comes the "call for reform, repentance, or renewal."⁹³ This threefold structure folds time in such a way that past, present, and future exist in a single dimension, offering a comprehensive explanation for the circumstances the nation finds itself in and supposedly pointing the way toward a better future. As a rhetorical device it aids dramatically in the ideological construction and enforcement of a collective political subjectivity (a "we the people") from what would otherwise be so many distinct individuals with disparate interests.

While the traditional jeremiad looks to an idealized past, the progressive jeremiad "offers a national narrative deeply grounded in the American past yet open to a dynamic and changing American future."⁹⁴ Murphy says that progressive American Jeremiahs like Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King Jr. urge their audiences to push forward, to be fulfillers of the Declaration's promises of liberty and equality. Bellamy's novels, too, pick up the threads of this narrative and give literary representation to its expectations. In them he tears

⁹² The jeremiad of the Puritans is according to Murphy also the jeremiad of the contemporary Christian Right. He points to the likes of Jerry Falwell, Bill O'Reilly and Pat Buchanan as conservative Jeremiahs who falsely idealize America's past only to lament its deterioration into the sinful and failing state that it is supposedly in today.

⁹³ Andrew Murphy, *Prodigal Nation: Moral Decline and Divine Punishment from New England to 9/11* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7-10.

⁹⁴ Murphy, *Prodigal Nation*, 171.

ruthlessly into the culture of exploitation, inequality, and social denigration that was deepened by the rise of industrialization in the era of the great Trusts; yet he refuses in his lamentation to cast the American people as irredeemable. Surely, he assumes, these good people will change their ways as they become aware of their participation in the carnage. He refuses to condemn either the rich or the poor, as individuals or even as classes, for savageries committed against one another in the name of gain or, just as often, survival. Instead, he empathizes with people who have fallen victim to the blinding charms of the Gilded Age and so, innocently enough, cannot yet see another way in front of them. He expresses a hopeful, if naive, belief in progress and the exceptional nature of the American project when he proclaims that the Nationalists “seek the final answer to the social question not in revolution, but in evolution; not in destruction, but in fulfillment,--the fulfillment of the hitherto stunted development of the nation according to its logical intent.”⁹⁵

Bellamy’s idealism was instinctive and incurable, but it was also self-conscious. In an early address to his hometown lyceum, he speculated that

A faith in the good time coming might, I think, be set down as among those innate ideas with which, as certain philosophers insist, every soul is born impregnated. Assuredly, no idea has been more common to all men and all ages than the belief that the world has before it an era of perfection, when every obstacle of physical nature, and the far more stubborn obstacles of human ignorance, having been removed, every possibility of political and social amelioration shall be effected, and every human faculty shall have free course and be glorified. And indeed it is impossible to conceive how anyone could zealously labor for the weal of men unless his soul were cheered and guided by some scintillations of this hope--some glimpse of this distant dawning.⁹⁶

The implication is that utopian expectation is culturally ubiquitous because it is what gives meaning and direction to human life, fulfilling various psychic needs for both individuals and

⁹⁵ Edward Bellamy, “Plutocracy or Nationalism--Which?,” public address, May 31, 1889 (repr., in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, Westport CT: Hyperion Press, 1975), 48.

⁹⁶ Arthur E. Morgan, preface to *Edward Bellamy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), viii-ix. Morgan references the unpublished papers of Edward Bellamy, B2-4-13.

groups. Chapter three explores this point in depth, but for now it returns us to an understanding of the social and political necessity of utopia.

Bellamy's utopia did what all utopias do which is, according to Paul Tillich, serve as a "symbol of expectation" that galvanizes public attention around an idea(l). His vision of industrial democracy resonated so strongly among his contemporaries because it reinterpreted an American identity narrative that is at least as old as John Winthrop's 1630 sermon "A Model of Christian Charity." Winthrop famously invokes the biblical imagery of a "city upon a hill" to emphasize the exceptional nature of the Massachusetts Bay colony in the eyes of God and the world and to affirm the covenantal nature of their mission. In the same sermon Winthrop argues that the fate of the individual and collective are inevitably bound together in divine and mutual obligation, underscoring the Puritan belief that individual salvation depends upon service to one's community.⁹⁷ From Jonathan Edwards to Edward Bellamy this conviction is characteristic of a certain kind of philosophical individualism: the idea that "community not only allows, but is only made possible by, the pursuit of individual interests as a means of promoting those of the group."⁹⁸

As we will see in the next chapter, this is a very American conviction, one malleable enough to justify both Bellamy's radical egalitarianism and the bourgeois liberalism of his political opponents. Whereas chapters one and three explore Bellamy's political theology--the

⁹⁷ John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," Winthropsociety.com, http://winthropsociety.com/doc_charity.php (accessed February 23, 2015). Winthrop reasons, "it appears plainly that no man is made more honorable than another or more wealthy etc., out of any particular and singular respect to himself, but for the glory of his Creator and the Common good of the Creature, Man"; therefore, "the care of the public must oversway all private respects, by which, not only conscience, but mere civil policy, doth bind us. For it is a true rule that particular estates cannot subsist in the ruin of the public."

⁹⁸ Richard A. Spurgeon Hall, "The Religious Ethics of Edward Bellamy and Jonathan Edwards," *Utopian Studies* 8, 2 (1997): 28.

way his spiritual beliefs inform his political convictions--chapter two treats him as a prophet of America's civil religion. In this case the questions move in the other direction. How do Bellamy's novels frame the ideals of American democracy as principles of divine justice? What kind of effects did the universalization of these principles have, discursively and politically? By entering with him into conversation with contemporaries on both his Right and his Left, we can observe how the meaning of words like "freedom" and "equality" were changing in response to the class bifurcation of the Gilded Age.

2

SOLIDARITY:
CIVIC VIRTUE AND THE NEW REPUBLICANISM

The labor struggles of the Gilded Age represent an ideologically contentious period of US history. It was a period in which principles of American democracy were being transformed for a new industrial age and competing conceptions of civic virtue struggled to dominate public conversation. Edward Bellamy was a radical socialist, but his readers encountered his politics through a series of common sense appeals to familiar civic virtues (e.g., personal liberty, equality of interest, the dignity of labor). His themes of democratic solidarity and economic justice had strong resonances with the new labor republicanism, which demanded a collective rethinking of the meaning of freedom in the industrial era, and he shared their demand for a cooperative model of economic self-determination. While I will develop these affiliations at length below, the chapter begins with a discussion of the liberal bourgeois alternative that Bellamy uses as a foil for many of his own arguments: the so-called honest-wage ideology, a dominant middle-class discourse that had little to do with the everyday struggles of the working class.

In *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion*, Judith Shklar notes that social reform efforts during this time were directed against the rise of a “highly visible plutocracy...with all its idle luxuries, stupendous vulgarity, and upper-class European pretensions.”⁹⁹ In the Jacksonian

⁹⁹ Judith N. Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 86.

era, a vastly different political-economic climate encouraged individual initiative and self-sufficiency, and Americans came to see themselves as “a nation of self-made men.”¹⁰⁰ But with the rise of industrialization that followed the Civil War, opportunities for self-sufficient enterprise were drying up, and the meaning of independent citizenship had to evolve. Part of America’s post-war identity crisis was, naturally, related to its painful history of forced slave labor. Shklar argues that because the average American citizen perceived themselves as occupying a position “between the equally unacceptable conditions of idle elites and unpaid slaves,” by the end of the nineteenth century paid labor had become a mark of freedom.¹⁰¹

Shklar’s central thesis is that the right to earn is at least as central a feature of citizenship in the United States as is the right to vote. While she does acknowledge that “wage earning as a system, with its dependence upon employers, was from the first looked upon with suspicion and fear as a threat to republican citizenship in the last century,” she advances a familiar narrative in which wage earning came over time to replace “an outmoded notion of public virtue” and to become the new “ethical basis of democratic citizenship.”¹⁰² As Shklar puts it, “a good citizen is an earner, because independence is the indelibly necessary quality of genuine, democratic citizenship.”¹⁰³ As we will see below, economic independence has always been integral to how Americans understand themselves to be free, but in the industrial era its meaning was changing. The kind of self-sustainability that characterized an earlier agricultural ideal was no longer

¹⁰⁰ Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 69. Henry Clay was the first to use this phrase publicly in 1832, “coining a term that has remained in the national lexicon ever since.” Cullen notes that Andrew Jackson was archetypal for the time: “[he] was great *because* he was poor.” He was proof that with a lot of hard work (and maybe more than a little luck) one could move from the bottom to the top, that economic inequality was no obstacle to the ambitious and deserving.

¹⁰¹ Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 65.

¹⁰² Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 94, 67.

¹⁰³ Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 92.

relevant. Instead independence would come to mean the ability “to spend and save and give as one chooses, without asking leave of any superior.”¹⁰⁴

In Shklar’s story, “American-ness”--as a way-of-being-citizen--came to center around a sort of economic role-playing wherein political being was subsumed to economic being and economic participation (earning and spending) was substituted for more meaningful forms of civic engagement. In his 2014 book *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth*, Alex Gourevitch problematizes the conventional narrative of changing civic virtue in the Gilded Age, the kind that depicts an “epochal confrontation between virtue and interest, glory and peace,” in which commercial participation triumphs over and replaces political participation as the determining factor of American citizenship.¹⁰⁵ These narratives, he claims, gloss over the ambiguous reception the idea of “free labor” received following the end of the Civil War, and largely ignore the loud and lasting responses from the political left, who learned during this period how to mobilize into large-scale coalitions in order to gain maximum leverage against powerful corporate alliances. Shklar is right that for all of the industrial era’s ideological turmoil, there was general agreement about the idea that economic independence represented the material foundation of a free citizenry. But her narrative too neatly fits a triumphalist liberalism by simplifying the discursive context of Bellamy and his contemporaries. A look at some of these late-nineteenth century sources--who are closer to the action on the ground than are historians like Shklar, who is writing at the end of the twentieth century--allows us to reconstruct a story that mainstream liberal theory has largely neglected.

¹⁰⁴ Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 68.

¹⁰⁵ Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to Cooperative Commonwealth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 144.

Bellamy's was only one among a chorus of voices during the Gilded Age contesting the line that "free labor" cultivated good democratic citizens. Gourevitch's analysis, for example, centers on the Knights of Labor, one of the late-nineteenth century's most influential labor organizations. While the Knights campaigned for higher wages and shorter hours and promoted the possibility of enjoying the life of leisure and self-cultivation made possible by the accumulation of wealth under capital, theirs was always more than just an argument for bourgeois consumerism. As Gourevitch puts it, "What began as a demand for higher wages and fewer hours would develop into the need for the benefits of independence itself."¹⁰⁶ And independence meant much more to them than the wage laborer's "right" to participate in the economy by earning and spending. Gourevitch explains how in response to the failure of traditional notions of civic freedom in the industrial era the Knights promoted a reimagined "labor republicanism." They maintained the conventional view that freedom is bound up with one's opportunity to be self-determining in one's laboring activity, but argued that the legally-protected status to enter into contracts was no longer enough to guarantee this opportunity for the wage-laborer. Their solution was to extend the right of self-determination to the working masses by democratizing control of industry.

The call for cooperative control of manufacturing and commerce was also coming from John Dewey, this time in the name of liberal democracy. In an early essay called "The Ethics of Democracy," Dewey expresses an expectation that only the democratic control of industry can ensure that all citizens will share in the cooperatively produced wealth of the nation (which includes not only its vast stockpiles of material goods, but also the more abstract possibility of a

¹⁰⁶ Gourevitch, *Cooperative Commonwealth*, 155.

greater exercise of personal liberty made possible by a general increase in leisure time). Dewey was a democratic individualist, but his was “an individualism of freedom, of responsibility, of initiative to and for the ethical ideal, not an individualism of lawlessness.”¹⁰⁷ For him, democracy meant a society organized around the idea that, if given the opportunity to do so, every citizen will take personal responsibility for her own life and for the well-being of her community.

Bellamy’s voice is unique in that it moves freely between the two political registers of civic republicanism and democratic autonomy. Below we will enter into his utopia as it navigates these chaotic public dialogues that emerged when the familiar political, economic and religious narratives were threatened following the Civil War. His novels offers a vivid criticism of corrupt and diminished public values--values propped up through the latter decades of the nineteenth century by the decaying mythology of the “self-made man” in much the same way that they are propped up in this New Gilded Age by the decaying mythologies of the American Dream and “upward mobility.” We will see below how his novels challenged such common sense defenses of the capitalist order as the fetishization of individual liberty, accusations of leveling, and the sanctification of private property. Bellamy presents his readers with a different narrative, a new common sense with which to confront the amassing power of the plutocracy.

¹⁰⁷ John Dewey, “The Ethics of Democracy,” in *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882-1898: Early Essays and Leibniz’s New Essays*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (1969; repr., Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 2008), 244.

Equal Freedom for All¹⁰⁸

Shklar's narrative accounts for the changing meaning of citizenship in industrial America at a time in which the civic virtues of liberty and self-determination were being translated into the formal right of contract, which broadened opportunities for individuals to sell their labor on the market for an "honest wage." The eagerness with which members of the working and middle classes accepted wage earning as a symbol of freedom and civic status had much to do, she suggests, with the nation's recent experience with the moral and cultural degradation--not to mention human devastation--that attends a system of unpaid slave labor. From this perspective, earning a wage appeared to be the most basic affirmation not only of one's dignity as a human being, but also of one's position as a productive member of society. To this effect, Shklar also points to a pervasive anti-aristocratic sentiment among middle-class Americans of the nineteenth century. They thought of the aristocrat, she says, as "not only a political monopolist, [but] a moral and cultural threat to the republic as well." For them, "the merely rich were unobjectionable, but the 'idle rich' were intolerable," concluding that "the great division among men in society was not between poor and rich, but between the 'do-somethings' and the 'do-nothings.'"¹⁰⁹

Although Shklar's account is not itself ideological, it does rely heavily on an ideological discourse that has served historically to deflect attention from systemic sources of domination and exploitation. The industrial-era rhetoric used to justify wage labor as a mark of dignity and freedom itself harks back to an antiquated concept of economic independence, reviving a

¹⁰⁸ In an interview on the podcast "The Majority Report" from February 2017, Gourevitch spoke of the contemporary need for "a progressive politics of equal freedom for all"; I took this to be an equally apt description of what Bellamy and the Knights and so many others were seeking to cultivate during the labor struggles of the first Gilded Age.

¹⁰⁹ Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 74-5.

Jeffersonian agrarianism wherein the farmer both owns and works his land and is capable of producing enough to satisfy the needs of his family. In this narrow sense, the farmer is fully self-determining. Without needing to depend on outside sources for support, the farmer embodies the (masculinist) virtues of independent citizenship.

This same basic worldview was advanced during the Gilded Age by bourgeois liberal theologians like Henry Ward Beecher and Newman Smyth, both celebrated evangelists and abolitionists who, despite their passion for social reform, consistently denounced political attempts to rectify income and wealth inequality. According to them, hard work and tenacious optimism were the outward manifestations of moral goodness, and material prosperity was how the Lord blessed honorable citizens. They preached that success was proof of virtue; yet, it was not wealth so much as hard work that was the indicator of a fit citizen. Because “free labor” was thought to develop individual dignity, they expressed contempt for non-working members of society, rich and poor alike. Beecher’s stance is characteristic. In an 1873 sermon titled “Industry and Idleness,” he declares, “A hearty industry promotes happiness....The poor man with industry, is happier than the rich man in idleness; for labor makes one more manly, and riches unmans the other.”¹¹⁰ While he admits, in another sermon called “The Strike and Its Lessons” (1877), that “working-men are subject to many petty injustices or informalities of justice, and...do honestly and rightfully aspire to higher places and higher things,” he dogmatically objects to the practice of compulsory union membership. These injustices, he says, are best remedied “not by the way of the grogshop, nor by the way of the caucus, nor by the way

¹¹⁰ Henry Ward Beecher, “Industry and Idleness,” *Wellman’s Miscellany*, January 1873.

of combinations, but by the way of the school, by the way of self-denial, by the way of more work or better work, by the way of more refinement, a nobler ambition, and a truer manhood.”¹¹¹

Beecher’s profound commitment to this type of philosophical individualism demands that he minimize the structural aspects of chronic poverty and emphasize its personal elements. By focusing solely on individual merit and responsibility his argument precludes any centralized or coercive attempt at radical systemic change. Even Smyth, who is sympathetic to the socialist cause (naming Christ and Plato among its most worthy proponents),¹¹² insists that the social injustices of industrial capitalism are not systemic but essentially private in nature. He declares that “beneath all economic ills there lies in humanity some moral wrong.” He asks: “Who has done this evil thing?” He answers: “It was satanic greed in those men’s hearts which did it. It was not capital; it was not the law of private property; it was not the principle of competition; it was the hard, reckless, hellish selfishness in those men’s hearts from which proceeded their evil deed.”¹¹³ Unlike Bellamy, who implicates institutions as opposed to individuals, Smyth thinks that social problems begin and end with bad people. He is dismissive of the possibility of socialist revolution, alleging that “the ‘cooperative commonwealth’...is beyond the powers of human nature.”¹¹⁴

Arguments like these reinforce the view that inequality and exploitation are inevitable, and that coordinated or coercive attempts to eradicate them are not only futile but contrary to the will of God. Beecher offers a natural law justification of economic inequality, reflecting on the

¹¹¹ Henry Ward Beecher, “The Strike and Its Lessons,” *Christian Union*, August 8, 1877.

¹¹² Newman Smyth, “Social Problems in the Pulpit, Sermon I: The Claims of Labor,” *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly*, April 1885.

¹¹³ Newman Smyth, “Social Problems in the Pulpit, Sermon II: Use and Abuse of Capital,” *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly*, May 1885.

¹¹⁴ Smyth, “Capital,” 425.

conditions of the European working-classes in order to insinuate that the poor--even the working poor--are inferior by nature.

The working population of Europe is largely ignorant--that is the trouble; and therefore they are largely kept under. They are lacking in personal development. They are lacking in the art of developing wealth. They are lacking in the art of self-government. They are lacking in the generation of ideas. They are lacking in the power of controlling civil organizations....they reap the natural fruits of inferiority, not because men want to oppress them, but because it is the natural order of things that the greater should surpass the less.¹¹⁵

According to his logic, a wealthy and powerful person can be said to deserve her status because of her superior character, intelligence, work ethic, etc. However, the same assumption of desert--when it moves in the opposite direction--becomes a cruel justification of political complacency in the face of human suffering.

Howard Quint sets up the clear opposition between Bellamy and the bourgeois Protestant clergy: "In a torrent of Social Gospel criticism, he scorned the various denominations for obsequiousness to the wealthy, for lack of concern for the economically less privileged, for preoccupation with arid theologies and false finalities, and for a pessimistic outlook on the possibilities of man in the here and now."¹¹⁶ In *Looking Backward*, and in its sequel *Equality*, Bellamy uses plain and persuasive language to pull the mask off the hypocrisies and ideological double-speak of those who came to the defense of the plutocratic ruling structure. In formulating these novels the way he does--as a series of didactic conversations between a representative figure of the Gilded-Age bourgeoisie and his various interlocutors from the post-revolutionary

¹¹⁵ Beecher, "The Strike," 112. "Are the working men of the world oppressed?...Yes, undoubtedly, by governments, by rich men, and by the educated classes. Are the great toiling multitudes of the world oppressed by governments, by rich men, and by the educated people of society because they want to oppress them? No. It is because it must be so."

¹¹⁶ Howard Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement* (1953; repr., Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 275.

society of the twenty-first century--he allows his contemporaries to enter into a changed world and ask it questions.

The narrative, which continues uninterrupted from *Looking Backward* through *Equality*, unfolds as an extended response to Julian's inquiry as to how the new society has solved "the labor question," which he calls "the Sphinx's riddle of the nineteenth century."¹¹⁷ Dr. Leete, Julian's host and principal guide, explains that "the solution came as the result of a process of industrial evolution which could not have terminated otherwise." Society had merely "to recognize and cooperate with that evolution when its tendency had become unmistakable." True, the strikes and struggles that preceded the turn of the twentieth century were a reaction to the massive concentration of private capital, against which individual laborers were forced to unionize in "self-defense."¹¹⁸ But, the doctor points out, as loathsome as this economic power-sharing arrangement was, with its monopolistic price-fixing and quelling of competition, its wealth-generating capacity was unmatched in the history of the world. "Its victims," he says, "were forced to admit the prodigious increase of efficiency which had been imparted to the national industries," as well as "the vast economies effected by concentration of management and unity of organization."¹¹⁹ Thus, at a certain point, citizens began to see that they might harness the innovations of private capital and transform them in service to the public good.

Here Bellamy agrees with the Knights of Labor and their ideological allies who rejected the liberal ideal of civic virtue as out of sync with the trajectory of labor in an industrial society, which was organized and irreducibly social. Labor republicans, as Gourevitch calls them, argued

¹¹⁷ Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (1888; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 23.

¹¹⁸ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 24-5.

¹¹⁹ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 26.

therefore that the republican concept of freedom as non-domination, if it were to be at all meaningful, must be translated into a principle of cooperative ownership. Classical republicanism conceives of freedom as a limited principle, where the freedom of some depends upon the unfreedom of others--the citizen was independent and free because he was dominating others, non-citizens and slaves who were dependent and unfree. Labor republicans transformed this limited concept of freedom, one predicated on domination, to one that was consistent with the democratic principle of equality. Their crucial innovation was the conviction that “free labor” must be “established *in* and *through* each laborer’s relations with others, rather than *prior* to or *absent* these social relations” as it was represented by both the pre-industrial agrarian ideal and the ideology of free contract.¹²⁰

Labor republicans thought that the phrase “free labor” was deceitful--that it promoted relationships of inequality and involuntary servitude as their opposite. They argued that contracted labor was not free at all, but coerced by the desperate conditions of industrial society. Thus, they objected to the wage-labor system as, essentially, class-slavery, alleging that it re-created the immediate domination of master over slave with a less direct but equally binding and even more widespread impersonal dependence. While the element of personal domination that characterized chattel slavery was the direct ownership of one human being by another, the structural domination of wage-labor meant that the entire working class was, in effect, owned by the capitalist class. The hypothetical “exit option” allowed liberals to advocate for contractual relations on the basis of freedom of choice, but it did not represent a real option for the worker

¹²⁰ Gourevitch, *Cooperative Commonwealth*, 126.

because the position of being dominated is not linked to a particular workplace; the “right to exit” a contract does not free the laborer from domination by capital.

Because the consolidation of ownership that took place over the latter half of the nineteenth century had left workers with no say in the day to day operations of industrial production, labor republicans sought to democratize industry by means of cooperative ownership and worker-directed management. Gourevitch says that “cooperation guaranteed independence in the workplace by inverting the relationship between worker and manager.” In other words,

the connection between cooperative institutions and the idea of independence lay not just in the negative case against subjection to the boss, but also in the positive idea that workers had the capacity for self-government and should be free to develop and exercise these capacities in their daily lives. The positive and negative aspects of the argument were really two sides of the same coin--subjection was wrong because the worker had the positive capacity for independent judgment.¹²¹

Their call for cooperative ownership and management of industry was based on the ethical claim that subjection is wrong because all people possess an innate capacity for self-determination. Industrial capitalism operates according to the principle of competition and so pits individuals against one another in pursuit of personal success (or even in many cases simply survival). For that reason labor republicans argued not only that capitalism is incompatible with any long-term conception of the public good, but that it in fact dehumanizes workers by denying them the opportunity to engage as moral equals in the process of self-determination.

As a much needed corrective to this, labor republicanism promoted “shared ownership and control of productive resources.”¹²² Rather than compel folks to view each other as impediments to their own survival, solidarity encouraged “the willingness to act collectively on the understanding that the individual best advanced his or her own interests cooperatively, in

¹²¹ Gourevitch, *Cooperative Commonwealth*, 121.

¹²² Gourevitch, *Cooperative Commonwealth*, 119.

social and political action together with others, rather than competitively, against others.”¹²³

Thus, the civic virtues of solidarity depended on a sort of enlightened self-interest wherein the individual worker identified her good with the good of the working class broadly.¹²⁴ Solidarity did not preclude independent action; however, independence could no longer mean “acting without the need to coordinate one’s own labor with others.”¹²⁵ Instead, labor republicans gave positive meaning to the idea of independence, encouraging “experiments with self-education.” The idea is that one must develop and exercise one’s unique interests and abilities to participate most effectively as a member of a group.¹²⁶

Of course, this ran counter to liberal defenses of “free labor,” which rested on the fiction of the artificially isolated individual, a fiction that conveniently justified the greed, selfishness, and competition of the status quo by minimizing the importance of community and cooperation. And as America moved deeper into the industrial era, it became more and more evident that this idea was at odds with the reality of large-scale production. Labor republicans responded by reimagining freedom as cooperative self-determination and by demanding that workers be allowed to participate in the democratic control of industry. Dewey responded likewise in “The Ethics of Democracy,” published in 1888, the same year as *Looking Backward*. In this essay he presents the democratic ideal as essentially compatible with the cooperative ideal of labor republicanism, explicitly insisting that “democracy is not in reality what it is in name until it is

¹²³ Gourevitch, *Cooperative Commonwealth*, 149.

¹²⁴ Of course, the labor republicans distinguished “self-interestedness,” which was supposed to incorporate a long view of individual, class, and social goods, from “selfishness,” which meant “the willingness to improve one’s own condition even if it meant leaving others behind” (162).

¹²⁵ Gourevitch, *Cooperative Commonwealth*, 126.

¹²⁶ Gourevitch, *Cooperative Commonwealth*, 160.

industrial, as well as civil and political.”¹²⁷ The essay begins by outlining the merits of democracy against those who were committed, whether implicitly or explicitly, to the belief that aristocratic rule--of the smartest, or the richest, or of the highest born--is the only proper or realistic arrangement of political power. What democracy shares with aristocracy, Dewey says, is a belief that “when an individual has found that place in society for which he is best fitted and is exercising the function proper to that place, he has obtained his completest development.” But whereas aristocracy would “[insert] by wisdom, or, if necessary, thrust by force” its citizens into place, democracy knows that each “must find this place and assume this work in the main for himself.”¹²⁸ With its assumption that the ethical ideal of a society “is already at work in every personality, and must be trusted to care for itself,” democracy is supposed to balance personal liberty with the kind of collective self-determination promoted by labor republicans.¹²⁹ Democracy takes the individual as the primary political unit because the individual represents the “localized manifestation” and the “vital embodiment” of the life of the organic whole of society, which “manifests itself as what it truly is, an ideal or spiritual life, a unity of will.”¹³⁰

It is Dewey’s organicism that leads him to make virtually the same political claim as the labor republicans: that independence and self-determination can only be made consistent with equality through cooperative industrial relations. But he also recognizes that liberal democracy’s historical identification with free-market capitalism inhibits the full implementation of its ideal by maintaining a rhetorical distinction between ethics and economics:

¹²⁷ Dewey, “Ethics,” 248, 246.

¹²⁸ Dewey, “Ethics,” 243.

¹²⁹ Dewey claims that “personality is the first and final reality,” the “central position” from which “the other notes of democracy, liberty, equality, fraternity” ultimately derive (244).

¹³⁰ Dewey, “Ethics,” 236.

We have, nominally, at least, given up the idea that a certain body of men are to be set aside for the doing of this necessary work; but we still think of this work, and of the relations pertaining to it, as if they were outside of the ethical realm and wholly in the natural. We admit, nay, at times we claim, that ethical rules are to be applied to this industrial sphere, but we think of it as an external application. That the economic and industrial life is in itself ethical, that it is to be made contributory to the realization of personality through the formation of a higher and more complete unity among men, this is what we do not recognize; but such is the meaning of the statement that democracy must become industrial.¹³¹

Much later, in a 1934 essay called “The Great American Prophet,” Dewey would praise Bellamy, saying that “the worth of [his] books in effecting a translation of the ideas of democracy into economic terms is incalculable.” Consistent with his earlier claims about the need to reframe conversations so that economic questions become ethical ones first and foremost, he proposes that “what Uncle Tom’s Cabin was to the anti-slavery movement Bellamy’s book may well be to the shaping of popular opinion for a new social order.”¹³²

Equality--Not Identity--of Interest

For Dewey, democracy represents the ultimate merging of Western ethical and political ideals:

Democracy and the one, the ultimate, ethical ideal of humanity are to my mind synonyms. The idea of democracy, the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, represent a society in which the distinction between the spiritual and the secular has ceased, and as in Greek theory, as in the Christian theory of the Kingdom of God, the church and the state, the divine and the human organization of society are one.¹³³

This idea of a spiritual and secular convergence is perhaps the most interesting correspondence between his work and Bellamy’s utopianism, based on claims I made in the previous chapter about the possibility of thinking about the latter in terms of secular revival. In chapter three I

¹³¹ Dewey, “Ethics,” 248.

¹³² John Dewey, “The Great American Prophet,” in *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953: Essays, Reviews, Miscellany, and a Common Faith, 1933-1934*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (1986; repr., Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 106.

¹³³ Dewey, “Ethics,” 248.

will return to a discussion of the political-theological significance of this utopian thinking, but below we will enter directly into Bellamy's texts, putting his polemical strategies into context.

Bellamy was in agreement with Dewey and the labor republicans that liberty and equality could only be made consistent through cooperative industrial relations--in other words, they all recognized that if freedom meant the right to self-determination, then its extension to all members of society would only be possible when both the burdens and the profits of labor were shared. This was the basic premise of his call for political and economic solidarity. In an 1889 address called "Nationalism--Principles, Purposes" he explains the importance of maintaining an "equality of interest" in a "community of loss and gain."¹³⁴ He appeals to America's own short history to illustrate how the republican ideal of civic liberty was originally made possible, as Tocqueville famously observed, by the approximate equality of wealth amongst its citizens.

Bellamy claims that

A republic is a form of government based upon and guaranteeing to all citizens a common interest in the national concern. That interest can be common only in proportion as it is substantially an equality of interest. The time has now come in America, as it has come sooner or later in the history of all republics, when by the increase of wealth and by gross disparity in its distribution, this equality in its three aspects--political, social, industrial--is threatened with complete subversion. In order, under the changed conditions, to make good the original pledge of the republic to its citizens, it has become necessary to re-establish and maintain by some deliberate plan that economic equality, the basis of all other sorts of equality which, when the republic was established, existed in a substantial degree by nature. The question is not of assuming a new obligation, but whether the original ends and purposes of the republican compact shall be repudiated. We demand that the republic keep faith with the people, and propose a plan of industrial reorganization which seems to us the only possible means by which that faith can be kept.¹³⁵

He explains to his audience that when the nation was in its infancy a relative equality of condition--at least outside slave states and especially in New England--generated a broad base of citizens who viewed themselves as more or less co-determining in both political and economic

¹³⁴ Edward Bellamy, "Nationalism--Principles, Purposes," public address, December 19, 1889 (repr., in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975), 59.

¹³⁵ Bellamy "Principles, Purposes," 58.

matters. When most had relatively little their equality of interest was obvious enough, but by the end of the nineteenth century, wealth had accumulated and inequalities were exacerbated--and with inequality of wealth came inequality of interest.

In a society with a great deal of wealth inequality, Bellamy says, “social equality is at an end, industrial independence is destroyed, while mere constitutional stipulations as to the equal rights of citizens politically or before the law, become ridiculous.”¹³⁶ He argued that because the tyranny of necessity is at least as oppressive as the tyranny of an illiberal government, the formal rights of citizenship must be supplemented by an equality of material interest in the collective political-economic enterprise of the nation. Thus Bellamy’s novels depict a totally socialized economy in which labor is centrally directed by a democratic government and income is distributed to all citizens equally without the need to measure contribution by capitalism’s conventional standards of “productivity.” It is of no matter *how much* any individual is able to contribute, only that they do. His industrial army includes an “invalid corps,” and so allows even those who are “deficient in mental or bodily strength” to participate, to whatever effect they can, in the shared effort of social reproduction.

Bellamy thought the idea of measuring desert in terms of productive output was evidence of the inhumane logic of the wage-labor system. He demonstrates this point in *Looking Backward* in a passage where Julian--who, like the reader, is ideologically conditioned to understand himself and his world according to the demands of liberal capitalism--has a hard time comprehending the disappearance of wages considering differential effort, and thus merit.

“Supposing all do the best they can,” Julian asks, “the amount of the product resulting is twice

¹³⁶ Bellamy, “Principles, Purposes,” 75.

greater from one man than from another.” The doctor reminds him that “desert is a moral question, and the amount of the product a material quantity.” Desert can’t be quantified, he says; “all men who do their best, do the same.”¹³⁷ This is why “the title of every man, woman, and child to the means of existence rests on no basis less plain, broad, and simple than the fact that they are fellows of one race--members of one human family.”¹³⁸ So whereas Adam Smith’s theory of the division of labor is a hallmark concept of liberal political economy typically used to justify free markets, Bellamy uses it to justify the exact opposite. Dr. Leete tells Julian that,

“As men grow more civilized, and the subdivision of occupations and services is carried out, a complex mutual dependence becomes the universal rule. Every man, however solitary may seem his occupation, is a member of a vast industrial partnership, as large as the nation, as large as humanity. The necessity of mutual dependence should imply the duty and guarantee of mutual support; and that it did not in your day constituted the essential cruelty and unreason of your system.”

This is a “graceful way of disguising charity” for those who are “incapable of self-support,” Julian says; to this the doctor responds, “There is no such thing in a civilized society as self-support.”¹³⁹ He goes on to explain that the very idea of charity is antithetical to the principle of solidarity because it only reifies the arbitrary distinctions of wealth and income, making permanent the unequal power relationship that is produced between those who give and those who receive. A universally equal income, on the other hand, negates the possibility of such a power imbalance by restoring substantial meaning to the civic ideal of equal interest.

However, as Julian goes on to speculate in *Equality*, the greatest task set before the leaders of the Revolution must have been that of “overcoming the enormous dead weight of immemorial inherited prejudice against the possibility of getting rid of abuses which had lasted

¹³⁷ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 45.

¹³⁸ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 65.

¹³⁹ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 64.

so long.” Yes, the doctor replies, “when the revolutionists attacked the fundamental justice of the old property system, its defenders were able on account of its antiquity to meet them with a tremendous bluff”; yet, “behind the bluff there was absolutely nothing,” and so “the moment public opinion could be nerved up to the point of calling it, the game was up.”¹⁴⁰ Bellamy’s own didactic approach speaks to the way that he perceived his role as a writer and rhetorician in the political struggle against plutocratic rule. Ultimately, his novels helped to de-mystify some of the most familiar defenses of the capitalist order and to popularize a new common sense regarding the ethical foundations of American democracy.

There is no doubt that the industrial army is a politically powerful image. Not only does it employ the martial metaphor, which remained a compelling piece of the post-war public imaginary, it also draws on the broad cultural appreciation of the dignity of labor (and the general hostility toward idleness) that Shklar makes a centerpiece of her own analysis. Bellamy strategically amplifies the underlying logic of this attitude to justify his own demand that labor be given protected status, an order that he believed could only be accomplished by fully submitting the nation’s industries to democratic control. This situation is the reverse of that described by Shklar wherein the right to enter into private contract of exploitation and domination is what marks a wage-earner as “free.” In the post-revolutionary America of *Looking Backward* “the worker is not a citizen because he works, but works because he is a citizen.”¹⁴¹ By dissolving the conceptual link between work and wages Bellamy shifts the focus of discussion from individual initiative and aspiration under capitalism toward a wider, organic view of collective initiatives and aspirations under Nationalism. At the same time he is

¹⁴⁰ Edward Bellamy, *Equality*, (1897; repr., New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 126.

¹⁴¹ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 65.

absolutely serious about expanding, not contracting, opportunities for the democratic exercise of autonomy.

Bellamy has no problem reconciling his call for rigid economic egalitarianism with the ideals of liberal democratic government as he understands them. Some context will clarify this. As we saw in the previous chapter, his novels found their primary audience among white, middle-class Protestants, many of whom lined benches in the congregations of preachers like Beecher and Smyth who, although they agreed with Bellamy on many “social” reform issues, fundamentally disagreed with him about the sources of and remedies to economic inequality with all its attendant injustices. Their sermonic defenses of the ruling order maintained that it was a reflection of a divine will. Inequality is the natural order, says Beecher: “you may not like it; you may not think it to be right, but it is the divine arrangement, and you might as well accept it and not grumble.”¹⁴² In fact, he ridicules the “European” theory of income distribution, insisting that “any theory which teaches equalization of position where there is not equality in the fruits of productiveness is a wild vision and not a practicable theory”; such schemes are “against natural law and will never be practicable.”¹⁴³ What makes America different, what guarantees our liberty, he says, is the fact that “before the law we all have fundamental rights,” and that “rich or poor, educated, or ignorant, bond or free, black or white, foreign or native-born--the law recognizes none of these things.”¹⁴⁴

The idea that equality before the law was the sole and sufficient guarantor of freedom was integrally related to the idea that paid labor conferred dignity and civic status because labor

¹⁴² Beecher, “The Strike,” 113.

¹⁴³ Beecher, “The Strike,” 112.

¹⁴⁴ Beecher, “The Strike,” 113.

contracts were characterized as voluntary transactions between equals. This is why for Beecher and other liberals “the liberty of the individual is destroyed where men are not allowed to work when they please, where they please, as long as they please, for whom they please, and for what they please.”¹⁴⁵ For their ideological opponents, however, this formal idea of equality was part of the problem. It paid lip-service to the ideals of liberty and equality but, in refusing to provide legal protection for minority or even majority groups who lacked political power, it actively worked to protect the privilege of moneyed interests and to exacerbate the mounting material inequalities that accompanied accelerating industrialization. Labor republicans argued that the worker is not free to choose when, where, and for whom to work so much as he is compelled to accept work under whatever conditions he can find it and for however little pay is offered. As Bellamy charges, wage earners did not find themselves in a significantly different position than unpaid slaves:

“I ask you what is the name of an institution by which men control the labor of other men, and out of the abundance created by that labor having doled out to the laborers such a pittance as may barely support life and sustain strength for added tasks, reserve to themselves the vast surplus for the support of a life of ease and splendor? This, gentlemen, is slavery.”¹⁴⁶

Of course, Beecher explicitly denounces the practice of slavery on the grounds that slaves “have not control of that which by their own powers in legitimate spheres they can develop. The slave,” he laments, “was not allowed to reap the fruit of his labor.”¹⁴⁷ Revelatory of Beecher’s myopia, not to mention his antiquated sense of economic theory, is the fact that neither worker nor capitalist “reaps the fruit of his labor” under the wage system--the capitalist profits off labor

¹⁴⁵ Beecher, “The Strike,” 112.

¹⁴⁶ Edward Bellamy, “How I Wrote *Looking Backward*,” in *The Ladies Home Journal*, April 1894 (repr., in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975), 219. In this passage Bellamy is citing one of his original manuscripts from the year 1871 or ’72 called “The Barbarism of Society.”

¹⁴⁷ Beecher, “The Strike,” 113.

which is not his own, and the worker is compensated for far less than the value he produces.

Not only does Beecher's language illegitimately transplant an agrarian ontology onto an industrial society, it also represents one of the most familiar ideological defenses of capitalism. Bellamy's polemic was aimed in response to the bourgeois apologetics of those who, like Beecher, promoted a distorted concept of liberty in order to protect a narrow set of economic interests at the expense of other interests in the community.¹⁴⁸ Consider a monologue, from *Looking Backward*, delivered to Julian by his host Dr. Leete:

I am aware that you called yourselves free in the nineteenth century. The meaning of the word could not then, however, have been at all what it is at present, or you certainly would not have applied it to a society of which nearly every member was in a position of galling personal dependence upon others as to the very means of life, the poor upon the rich, or employed upon employer, women upon men, children upon parents. Instead of distributing the product of the nation directly to its members, which would seem the most natural and obvious method, it would actually appear that you had given your minds to devising a plan of hand to hand distribution, involving the maximum of personal humiliation to all classes of recipients.¹⁴⁹

Julian and his hosts discuss this at great length again in *Equality*. Dr. Leete paraphrases the opposition claim: "as a matter of justice, every one is entitled to the effect of his qualities--that is to say, the result of his abilities, the fruit of his efforts." Of course, "the qualities, abilities, and efforts of different persons being different, they would naturally acquire advantages over others in wealth seeking as in other ways"; and since "this was according to Nature,...nobody had any business to complain, unless of the Creator." He explains to his guest that "while the nineteenth-century moralists denied as sharply as we do men's rights to take advantage of their superiorities in direct dealings by physical force, they held that they might rightly do so when the dealings were indirect and carried on through the medium of things." But recognizing this rhetoric for

¹⁴⁸ In a passage from *Equality*, Bellamy specifically calls out the clergy on their sanctimoniousness, accusing them of promoting the doctrines of capital even though "they knew all the time, and everybody knew who listened to them, that the foundation principle of the whole property system was not ability, effort, or desert of any kind whatever, but merely the accident of birth" (120).

¹⁴⁹ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 127.

what it was, the doctor calls it “a roundabout expression of the doctrine that might is right.” He then demonstrates the irony of the position with a powerful comparison: a man “might not by force take away a bone from a beggar’s dog, but he might corner the grain supply of a nation and reduce millions to starvation.”¹⁵⁰

The further irony, according to the doctor, is that “of all conceivable plans for distributing property, none could have more absolutely defied every notion of desert based on economic effort,” and none “could more completely mock at ethics” than the wage labor system did. Himself the lucky inheritor of his fortune, Julian confirms the doctor’s characterization of the times. “You may set it down as a rule that the rich, the possessors of great wealth, had no moral right to it as based upon desert, for either their fortunes belonged to the class of inherited wealth, or else, when accumulated in a lifetime, necessarily represented chiefly the product of others, more or less forcibly or fraudulently obtained.”¹⁵¹ From Bellamy’s perspective the factors that allow some people to accumulate more than others are at best morally arbitrary; having no relationship to our basic moral equality as human beings, he insists, in direct contrast to the claims of bourgeois theology, that they ought not play a factor in determining access to social goods.

For similar reasons, Bellamy dismisses the defense of private property as one of the most transparent and disingenuous arguments made by liberal proponents of capitalism. In a chapter from *Equality* called “The Revolution Saves Private Property from Monopoly” Julian protests, as the reader would expect him to, that this new socialist economy must have done away with the right to private property which was considered sacred among his contemporaries. No, he is told;

¹⁵⁰ Bellamy, *Equality* 118-9.

¹⁵¹ Bellamy, *Equality*, 124.

the truth is just the reverse. Only nationalization of industry could have saved the right to private property from certain destruction, as it was being greedily gobbled up by the wealthiest few around the globe. Of course, the doctor explains, the revolution “abolished private capitalism”; but in doing so it “placed the private and personal property rights of every citizen upon a basis incomparably more solid and secure and extensive than they ever before had or could have had while private capitalism lasted.”¹⁵² How could that be? Well, “before the Revolution very few of the people had any property at all and no economic provision save from day to day”; following it, “all were assured of a large, equal, and fixed share in the total national principal and income.” The doctor asks Julian rhetorically,

Who, think you, were the true friends and champions of private property? those who advocated a system under which one man if clever enough could monopolize the earth--and a very small number were fast monopolizing it--turning the rest of the race into proletarians, or, on the other hand, those who demanded a system by which all should become property holders on equal terms?

To this he responds that the right of private property seems to have turned into “a most dangerous sort of boomerang” when first being trumpeted by the monopolists as an instrument of their greed, it came to be echoed by the masses as a rallying cry of the Revolution.¹⁵³

Bellamy identified another boomerang in the liberal charge that Nationalism, or socialism in general, aimed to “level” the kinds of natural differences in individual excellence that lead to wealth inequality. He turns this charge around in a passage from *Equality* wherein the superintendent of a twenty-first century bank explains to Julian how, “while we insist on equality we detest uniformity, and seek to provide free play to the greatest possible variety of tastes.”¹⁵⁴ It must be emphasized that Bellamy’s objection was not to the natural fact of difference, but to

¹⁵² Bellamy, *Equality*, 129.

¹⁵³ Bellamy, *Equality*, 131-2.

¹⁵⁴ Bellamy, *Equality*, 42.

the presence of a great and persistent inequality of wealth specifically as a symptom of the structurally entrenched domination of the wage laborer under capitalism. A universal material equality, he suggested, would produce quite the opposite of what the critics feared. Instead of ignoring or attempting to nullify natural difference, Bellamy thought that it could and should be incorporated into an economic structure that would adequately honor the varying needs, interests and capabilities of members of society.

His industrial army cultivates the autonomous development of its citizens even as it coordinates and centralizes their labor. It is designed to offer individuals the greatest possible discretion with regard to career choice, relying on a voluntary system in which every citizen receives, on top of a basic universal education, training for her top three career choices. This method also introduces some flexibility into the system to account for fluctuations in demand as well as the expectation that technology will continue to make certain sectors of industry obsolete. And while the central authority is responsible for organizing production and distribution, it does not replace the “market,” making decisions about what does and does not get produced; neither does it have any say in how individuals choose to allocate their allotted incomes.

Bellamy appreciates the role that private demand plays in a free and healthy economy and so envisions an arrangement capable of responding to it with more precision and less waste than the capitalist price mechanism could. He anticipates that nationalization would permit a more complete and transparent accounting of all the goods produced and moved by industry; this would in turn allow for a more accurate estimation of the public demand for basic necessities as well as for available amenities, the number and variety of which would be bound only by the limits of our collective capacity to reify them. At the same time, he is serious about the declared

rights of American citizenship, not the least of which is the right to “pursue happiness” according to one’s own measure of it. Therefore, Bellamy proposes to secure the possibility for even the most exceptional needs and singular desires to be satisfied by his system the same way it was purported to be secured by capitalism. He achieves this effect--rhetorically at least--by adapting the price mechanism to a demand-driven market that lacks buyers and sellers in the conventional sense. In *Looking Backward*, Dr. Leete explains to Julian how, “the maintenance of the worker being equal in all cases,” prices no longer reflect the costs of labor, but rather “the relative number of hours constituting a day’s work in different trades.” As we would expect, production becomes more “costly” when demand is low; but as long as some consumer finds some good “worth” prioritizing among her purchases, then it will be produced.¹⁵⁵ Having no independent authority to cease production without a total halt in public demand, the bureaucratic functions of Bellamy’s state amount essentially to tally-keeping and logistics administration.

In an exchange from *Equality*, Bellamy reiterates this important point that coordination of demand need not imply conformity of demand, that substantial equality and uniformity of taste or opinion are not intrinsically linked. Here Julian learns that the twenty-first century fashion industry offers a vital example of the logic of the new order. The style trends that were set in Julian’s day by certain “society leaders” were now regulated by the people--not by collective majority rule, but by each person individually according to her own tastes. From a post-revolutionary perspective, the “tedious sameness in dress” among members of the lower classes in the nineteenth century was an inadvertent effect of a lack of economic equality. “Because you were not equal, you made yourself miserable and ugly in the attempt to seem so,” his interlocutor

¹⁵⁵ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 89-90. Scarcity still plays a role in price-setting, as it did under the capitalist system, but by eliminating the profit incentive Bellamy aims to eliminate the temptation for producers to create false scarcity by engaging in wasteful practices (111).

pronounces harshly, implying that an outward sameness-of-appearance papered over the hierarchies which would otherwise reveal the failure of the claims of democratic equality under liberal capitalism. The strange practice of styles coming in and out of fashion “resulted from two factors: the desire of the common herd to imitate the superior class, and the desire of the superior class to protect themselves from that imitation and preserve distinction of appearance.”¹⁵⁶ While in a traditional hierarchical society one can presume that fashions would be dependent upon status; imitation of the higher ranks by the lower would be prohibited by custom if not by law. In a so-called democratic society pretensions were made that there were no classes and that, therefore, all were equal. Yet this fallacy was revealed by the fashion trends themselves.

For Bellamy, conditions of material *inequality* are what squelch originality and spontaneous action. Again, Julian’s guide explains to him that “the aesthetic equivalent of the moral wrong of inequality was the artistic abomination of uniformity.” Equality, on the other hand, “creates an atmosphere which kills imitation, and is pregnant with originality, for every one acts out himself, having nothing to gain by imitating anyone else.”¹⁵⁷ By equality, Bellamy does not mean sameness; on the contrary, he seeks to protect and ultimately proliferate a diversity of personal tastes, interests, talents, etc. In treating equality as a pre-requisite for individuality, he seems to have in mind something like the admonitions of J.S. Mill. Though conventionally interpreted as an anti-egalitarian, I argue that Mill shares Bellamy’s commitment to democratic equality as an essential ingredient in the success of liberal pluralism as a governing ideology. In *On Liberty*, Mill follows Wilhelm Von Humboldt in identifying “freedom” and “a variety of situations” as the necessary conditions for spontaneous self-development; he also

¹⁵⁶ Bellamy, *Equality*, 70.

¹⁵⁷ Bellamy, *Equality*, 71-2.

claims that “the only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it.”¹⁵⁸ Government, Mill thinks, best honors the autonomy of individuals by protecting their equal rights to liberty. This implies what Bellamy argues explicitly, that equality is a necessary condition for individuality.¹⁵⁹

Again, Bellamy wanted not to level distinction, but to cultivate it. He wanted to bring an end to the myth of the fully self-reliant individual for whom liberty meant abstaining from the socially interdependent processes of production and distribution in the industrial age. He was highly concerned with preserving room for the growth of individuality and personal excellence in a society that was so quickly, and inevitably as he saw it, becoming centrally organized. The way he explains it, social conditions of equality would actually open up more room for the individual pursuit of excellence and distinction which would, in turn, contribute to a new renaissance. As Dr. Leete tells Julian, the Revolution gave birth to “an era of mechanical invention, scientific discovery, art, musical and literary productiveness to which no previous age of the world offers anything comparable.”¹⁶⁰

If the ultimate aim of economic revolution is, as Bellamy sees it, a renewal of the individual and collective human spirit, then this goes a long way to justify Erich Fromm’s claim, in his 1960 foreword to a reissue of *Looking Backward*, that socialism “was the most significant humanistic and spiritual movement in Europe and America in the nineteenth century and until the beginning of the first World War.” Although in the twentieth century it would capitulate to the

¹⁵⁸ John Stuart Mill, “On Liberty,” in *The Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill* (New York, The Modern Library: 2002), 14-5.

¹⁵⁹ Mill, “On Liberty,” 58-9.

¹⁶⁰ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 79.

very zeitgeist it was endeavoring to resist, becoming “the vehicle by which the workers could attain their place within the capitalistic structure, rather than transcending it,”¹⁶¹ for Bellamy (as for Marx) socialism “was by no means primarily a movement for the abolishment of economic inequality;” rather, it aimed at “emancipation,” at motivating man to “transform himself into a being who can make creative use of his powers of feeling and of thinking.”¹⁶² As such, these socialists promoted “individuality, not uniformity,” encouraging citizens to hold “convictions and not synthetic opinions.” In this sense their ideal is akin to the democratic ideal--the basic principle of socialism was, Fromm says, “that each man is an end in himself, and must never be the means of another man.”¹⁶³ At the same time, these socialists perceived the tendency toward centralization that was inherent within capitalism and so rather than destroy the many social goods it had produced by abandoning its infrastructure altogether, they sought to cultivate the individual within it.¹⁶⁴

The People Versus the Plutocracy

Many cooperatist groups of the nineteenth century, including the Knights of Labor, favored ground-up models of organizing and were uninterested in--likely suspicious of--state control of industry. While Bellamy shared their aim of protecting the independence of the

¹⁶¹ Erich Fromm, foreword to *Looking Backward*, by Edward Bellamy (New York: New American Library, 1960), xvii.

¹⁶² Fromm, foreword, xvi.

¹⁶³ Fromm, foreword, xvii.

¹⁶⁴ Louis Filler argues that “Bellamy did not aim to destroy individualism. He hoped, rather, to open new avenues for it”; Filler says that Bellamy was “defending the human outposts of individualism,” and that his utopia was an attempt to “preserve what could be preserved of individualism in a society which demanded a high degree of organization” [from “Edward Bellamy and the Spiritual Unrest,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 8, 3 (April 1949): 242, 248]. Although I agree with the spirit of Filler’s point here, I think it is more accurate to say that Mill’s *individuality* is what Bellamy defends, rather than *individualism*, which connotes self-sufficiency and can even embrace uniformity.

citizen-worker by bringing the wage-labor system to an end, he extends their cooperative ideal significantly, depicting a future in which production and distribution are fully socialized and all industry decisions are brought under democratic control. But in proposing a statist solution to the problems of industrial capitalism one might wonder whether Bellamy would have us trade one form of structural domination for another--one that is partial, with the freedom of some depending upon the oppression and exploitation of others, to one that is total, with the entire population subject to the mechanisms of the state, which would act as the sole capitalist. The nationalization of industry is a dangerous prospect to those for whom cooperatism represents an alternative to state socialism as well as to privately-owned industry. For his part, though, Bellamy was skeptical about the political efficacy of small-scale cooperative organizing models against the embedded power of the plutocracy. While he saw union organizing as a step in the direction of economic self-determination, he also thought it was an incomplete or insufficient response to the reality of power imbalances during the Gilded Age.

Taking seriously the threat posed to American democracy by the economic dominance and increasing political power of the great industrialists, Bellamy anticipates Charles Lindblom's classic argument in *Politics and Markets* (1977) by nearly a century. In a passage in *Equality*, Julian observes that it was the "regular custom" of capitalists in the late-nineteenth century "to threaten to stop the industries of the country and produce a business crisis if the election did not go to suit them." He tells his hosts that at the time he fell into his mesmeric sleep there was a small group of people "whose world-wide power and resources were so vast and increasing at such a prodigious and accelerating rate that they had already an influence over the destinies of

nations wider than perhaps any monarch ever exercised.”¹⁶⁵ For Bellamy, it was no exaggeration to say that plutocratic control presented an existential threat to the livelihoods of most Americans:

“The main practical effect of the system was not to deprive the masses of mankind of life outright, but to force them, through want, to buy their lives by the surrender of their liberties....Although multitudes were always perishing from lack of subsistence, yet it was not the deliberate policy of the possessing class that they should do so. The rich had no use for dead men, on the other hand, they had endless use for human beings as servants, not only to produce more wealth, but as the instruments of their pleasure and luxury.”¹⁶⁶

Only the total abolition of the wage-labor system would suffice to remedy the injustices of capitalist domination because as long as “you own the things men must have, you own the men who must have them.”¹⁶⁷

Accordingly, Bellamy’s novels chronicle the hypothetical history of a “Great Revolution” in American politics and industry. In *Looking Backward* he writes that according to the twenty-first century history books, there was a moment when “the people of the United States concluded to assume the conduct of their own business, just as one hundred odd years before they had assumed the conduct of their own government.” This was a moment when

“the industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons at their caprice and for their profit, were intrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation...became the one capitalist in the place of all other capitalists, the sole employer, the final monopoly in which all previous and lesser monopolies were swallowed up, a monopoly in the profits and economies of which all citizens shared.”

Julian initially objects to this as an alarming “extension of the functions of government,” explaining to the doctor that in his own time “the proper functions of government” were thought

¹⁶⁵ Bellamy, *Equality*, 115.

¹⁶⁶ Bellamy, *Equality*, 91.

¹⁶⁷ Bellamy, *Equality*, 93.

to be “limited to keeping the peace and defending the people against the public enemy.” In response the doctor exclaims, “And, in heaven’s name, who are the public enemies?...Are they France, England, Germany, or hunger, cold, and nakedness?”¹⁶⁸ Confronting the familiar cry against governmental “interference” in the market, Bellamy ridicules a sovereign nation’s willingness to protect the lives of its citizens from foreign powers while letting its people die from lack within its own borders.

The characterization of Bellamy’s democratically-controlled industrial army as an inevitable administrative overreach is especially ironic considering the massive amount of administrative control that was already enjoyed by industrial giants. In an 1890 article for *Christian Union*, Bellamy signals his concern that the political institutions of the United States had been effectively taken hostage by the money power when he characterizes the corporate monopolies’ exercise of economic leverage as “step-paternalism.” He objects to this arrangement in which

a few score individuals and corporations determine, arbitrarily and without regard to natural laws, on what terms the people of the United States shall eat, drink and wherewithal they shall be clothed, what business they may do and what they may not, and whether they may do any at all, exercising by industrial and commercial methods a power in a hundred directions over the livelihood and concerns and very existence of the people, such as the most despotic government never dared assert, and which year by year and even month by month is becoming more complete and inevitable.¹⁶⁹

For him, Nationalism represented the “logical and practical antithesis” of this arrangement. Thus, his novels set readers before a hypothetical choice: either collectivize the nation’s industrial resources, or submit them in total--along with the liberties they make possible--to the self-interested rapaciousness of plutocratic rule.

¹⁶⁸ Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, 27.

¹⁶⁹ Edward Bellamy, “Some Misconceptions of Nationalism,” *The Christian Union*, November 13, 1890 (repr., in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975), 128.

There could be no middle ground between the plutocratic status quo and a fully nationalized economy because “any government, especially any popular government, which tolerates such mighty subjects, must end by becoming their tool.”¹⁷⁰ Bellamy thought that compared to his own radical prescriptions, other cooperatist platforms ceded too much to the enemy. For example, he thought the Fabian platform was too moderate; the way he saw it, if the full structural overhaul of the capitalist system was their goal, then they could not afford to compromise on the demand for income equality.¹⁷¹ But in practice Bellamy was about as politically as he was religiously non-sectarian, and he translated solidarity into a practice of coalition building. He believed that the special interests of the plutocrats were so opposed to the general interests of the nation that only the full, organized force of the public could combat the powerful organization of corporate monopolies. As such, Nationalism made a universal appeal to all those who opposed the money power in the name of freedom or equality. As we saw in chapter one, its platform was in passive agreement with a broad constituency that included cooperatists, socialists, populists and trade unionists, feminists, theosophists, and temperance activists, among others. Franklin Rosemont tells us that Bellamy’s weekly publication *The New Nation* regularly featured contributions from “all anticapitalist currents,” and promoted their books and newspapers in its pages.¹⁷² Even the anarchists, whose violent and disruptive methods he rejected outright in *Looking Backward* on the grounds that they did more to hinder than to

¹⁷⁰ Bellamy, “Misconceptions,” 129-30. “Between plutocracy and Nationalism the election must finally be made. There is no third choice.”

¹⁷¹ Fromm, foreword, xvi. Fromm tells us that Bellamy “wrote an introduction to the American edition of the *Fabian Essays* (1894)” in which “he endorsed the Fabian creed of public ownership of industry and commerce, and criticized it only because it did not go far enough, especially with regard to the completely equal distribution of income.”

¹⁷² Franklin Rosemont, “Bellamy’s Radicalism Reclaimed,” in *Looking Backward, 1888-1888: Essays on Edward Bellamy*, ed. Daphne Patai (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 165.

help the cause, were invited to join the conversation.¹⁷³ All told, the uncompromising nature of Bellamy's utopian demands--to end the wage labor system and to insure a general equality of income--was not reflected in his pragmatic attitude toward real-world political action. As a political actor he sought to bridge the diverse social movements of the Gilded Age with the aim of amassing a unified front against the considerable power of the capitalist trusts.

Bellamy seemed to sincerely believe that Americans could avert the approaching disaster by waking up and saying collectively to the capitalists, ““Yes, you have organized our industry, but at the price of enslaving us. We can do better.””¹⁷⁴ He persuasively argues that civic-mindedness rests most soundly on a substantial equality of interest. However, it should be noted that Bellamy was not quite a democrat in the conventional sense of the term. He does not insist upon a system of universal suffrage. In his utopia only retired members of the industrial army vote because, as he explains, their opinions are less likely to be tainted by myopic self interest.¹⁷⁵ Here again his logic is directly at odds with the conventional line. For him, the formality of

¹⁷³ Bellamy makes this point in a short passage from *Looking Backward* where Julian asks his host about the anarchists' role in the Great Revolution: “What part did the followers of the red flag take in the establishment of the new order of things? They were making considerable noise the last thing that I knew.” The Doctor replies, “They had nothing to do with it except to hinder it, of course...They did that very effectually while they lasted, for their talk so disgusted people as to deprive the best considered projects for social reform of a hearing. The subsidizing of those fellows was one of the shrewdest moves of the opponents of reform” (122). Rosemont notes that, despite this political divide, *The New Nation* still cross-promoted Benjamin Tucker's anarchist newspaper *Liberty*.

¹⁷⁴ Bellamy, *Equality*, 109.

¹⁷⁵ In this sense Bellamy is like Aristotle for whom the ruling ideal is about substance, not form: the question of “who rules?” matters less than the question of “whose interests are being represented?” In *Equality* he recounts a familiar argument, “that everyone who exercises the suffrage should not only be educated, but should have a stake in the country, in order that self-interest may be identified with public interest.” Julian observes that this argument was made in his day by those who endeavored to disenfranchise the poor and uneducated. In the new society, however, the conclusion is the exact opposite. If the logic holds, then every citizen must be assured an education as well as an equal stake in the wealth of the nation so that their vote will be meaningful (36). This idea is consistent with Jeffery Winter's claim, in his 2011 book *Oligarchy*, that oligarchic rule is not totally antithetical to modern ideas of democracy insofar as there remains a diversity of opinion among elites on most political issues. The fact, however, that elites of all ideological persuasions share the fundamental drive to defend their wealth is what returns him to Aristotle's analysis of just and unjust forms of government and the central problem of ruling interest.

voting is less central to the idea of free citizenship than is the public recognition and protection of every citizen's shared interest in the social goods of the nation.

Bellamy considered the fetishization of suffrage to be part of the ideological sham that disguised the plutocracy as popular government. In the first chapter of *Equality* the tables are turned in a conversation between Julian and Edith Leete, as he instructs her in matters of historical concern. She was struggling to understand why, if all Americans were equal before the law, if all their votes had equal weight, did not the poor of his day--who were such a great majority after all--vote to protect themselves from the exploitative endeavors of the capitalists? "Why did they not without a moment's delay put an end to the inequalities from which they suffered?" After a bit of equivocating, Julian finally chocks it up the powerful influence of ideology. He explains that people "were taught and believed that the regulation of industry and commerce and the production and distribution of wealth was something wholly outside of the proper province of government."¹⁷⁶ Edith is astonished to learn that the justification for relinquishing authority over matters of life and death to these unelected rulers rested on the fact that the great mass of citizens in Julian's day evidently could not discern their own best interests from those of their masters. He describes to her how the capitalists required the elected members of government to protect their property interests and, in turn, the elected members of government were "beggars to the capitalists for pecuniary support." In her innocence Edith presses her tutor further, saying "But I thought the President, the Governors, and Legislatures represented the people who voted for them." "Bless your heart!" he replies with obvious amusement; "no, why should they? It was to the capitalists and not to the people that they owed the opportunity of

¹⁷⁶ Bellamy, *Equality*, 17-8.

officeholding.” Sympathetic to her mental effort, Julian grants that “the confusion of terms in our political system is rather calculated to puzzle one at first”; however, “the vital point,” “the central principle of the system,” “the key that clears up any mystery,” he says, is simply “the rule of the rich, the supremacy of capital and its interests...against those of the people at large.”¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

In an America divided between a powerful and independent owning class and a politically powerless and dependent laboring class, economic inequality represented a tangible threat to self-determination for a great number of citizens. Only when a mass of workers viewed themselves as free and empowered citizens--and not as victims of forces beyond their control--could they come together in solidarity to reclaim opportunities for self-determination, opportunities that had been hijacked by the organized rich.

Bellamy’s radical call for state ownership of industry was a response to the realities of the power imbalances of the Gilded Age. Recognizing that the trend toward centralization was already begun by the great private trusts, he proposed that Nationalism would merely push it to its logical conclusion. He advocated a move away from the old expectations of market individualism and toward a new conception of civic virtue, which would require us to find new ways to work together to answer the most basic questions of public necessity. Because the structural dependencies effected by industrialization meant that labor reformers could count neither on the sympathies of the capitalists, who would find no reason to relinquish their dominant position willingly, nor on having access to unbiased political institutions to which they

¹⁷⁷ Bellamy, *Equality*, 23-4.

could appeal their case, he encouraged working men and women to educate themselves and one another about how their personal well-being was inextricably bound up with the well-being of their peers.

Bellamy's Nationalism makes room for personal autonomy even as it recognizes the necessity of solidarity in the people's struggle against the power of the plutocracy. Paradoxically, the political virtues of solidarity are cultivated through practices that include the development of an independent self, practices meant to strengthen the bond between individual and group self-determination. Based on a reading of Bellamy's early essay "The Religion of Solidarity" (1874), I will argue in the following chapter that his concept of political solidarity stems from an ontological perception of the essential unity of all being. We may even construct a more or less coherent "theology of solidarity" by building on connections made in chapter one between revivalism and utopia. I supplement this reading with Paul Tillich's essay on "The Political Meaning of Utopia," which locates the perennial impulse toward utopia in the human experience of estrangement. Together these essays build a bridge between Bellamy's consciousness of personal and social crisis and his desire to restore the fraught relationships between individual and universal being by imagining a new American utopia.

3

**THE GREAT AMERICAN PROPHET:
BELLAMY'S UTOPIAN EXPECTATION**

In previous chapters, we observed how changes in the American ideological landscape, especially those in the wake of the Second Great Awakening, resulted in a kind of turning-outward of religious demand that prompted Christian social reformers to see themselves as redeemers of the nation and, ultimately, the world. The post-millennial theologies of church leaders like Jonathan Edwards prophesied an impending Kingdom of Heaven on Earth--a time in which Christ would return to rule over His people for a period of one-thousand years. By the nineteenth century, this narrative of divine redemption had been translated into one of steady moral and scientific progress toward a more perfect realization of the nation's spiritual and secular ideals. For John Dewey, it is the merging of these realms--the sacred and the mundane--that represents the ethical ideal of liberal democracy. In "The Ethics of Democracy" (1888), he represents the democratic ideal as a society in which each and every individual has the opportunity to realize the "infinite and universal possibility" that lives inside of him: "that of being a king and priest."¹⁷⁸ The idea "that every citizen is a sovereign" is what Dewey calls "the American theory," and it is a "doctrine which in grandeur has but one equal in history,...namely, that every man is a priest of God."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ John Dewey, "The Ethics of Democracy," in *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882-1898: Early Essays and Leibniz's New Essays*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (1969; repr., Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 2008), 245.

¹⁷⁹ Dewey, "Ethics," 237.

In his book *Love, Power, and Justice* (1954), German-American theologian Paul Tillich makes a similar observation, identifying the drive to attain “the earthly form of the kingdom of God” as the “American vocation.” This calling, he says, is represented in our collective consciousness by the idea of the “American Dream”--an idea which by the middle of the twentieth century had achieved ideological domination “explicitly for one-half of the world and implicitly for the whole world”--and it is supported by such “quasi-religious concepts” as the Constitution and the notion of “living democracy.”¹⁸⁰ This observation is consistent with a previous claim made by Tillich, in 1952’s *The Courage to Be*, that in the face of tragedy or destruction or despair, the typical American “feels neither destroyed nor meaningless nor condemned nor without hope,” but instead expresses a faith that things can be done again, done differently, done better. Because “experimental failure does not mean discouragement,” the American ethos adopts a courageous attitude toward risk taking.¹⁸¹ According to Tillich, “the typical American, after he has lost the foundations of his existence, works for new foundations.” The knowledge that the human is fallible, that all action includes risk, and that failure is probable if not inevitable does not weaken but seems to strengthen their resolve. “This is true of the individual,” he says, “and it is true of the nation as a whole.”¹⁸²

Tillich’s attempt to explain this phenomenon is heavily psychological. First, he notes that “the anxiety of guilt and condemnation is deeply rooted in the American mind, first through the influence of Puritanism, then through the impact of the evangelical-pietistic movements.” With echoes of Nietzsche’s theory of bad conscience, he argues that

¹⁸⁰ Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice* (1954; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 103-4.

¹⁸¹ Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (1952; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 109.

¹⁸² Tillich, *Courage*, 108.

Guilt is produced by manifest shortcomings in adjustments to and achievements within the creative activities of society. It is the social group in which one participates productively that judges, forgives, and restores, after the adjustments have been made and the achievements have become visible. This is the reason for the existential insignificance of the experience of justification or forgiveness of sins in comparison with the striving for sanctification and the transformation of one's own being as well as one's world. A new beginning is demanded and attempted.¹⁸³

That it is not enough to be forgiven for our sins, that the overcoming of personal guilt requires an active effort to transform the shared world, is what justifies a theology of social reform. This logic implies a revivalist politics by its very nature because if the citizen is truly the microcosmic embodiment of society as a whole, then a transformation of oneself *is* the transformation of the social body, and vice versa.

In chapter one I proposed that we think about collectivist organizing around the labor struggle in terms of secular revival. In this chapter I pick up this thread by framing Bellamy's utopia as a secular adaptation of the post-millennial expectation of the coming Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. I return to his early essay "The Religion of Solidarity" in order to see how his basic ontological worldview maps on to a universalist theology that in turn informs the political theoretical assumptions he makes in *Looking Backward* and *Equality*. To build these relationships I rely heavily on Tillich, whose series of lectures on "The Political Meaning of Utopia" (1951) offers a lens through which to understand utopian symbolism as a powerful reflection on the human condition. Tillich suggests that at its core, utopia is a metaphor for the human drive to overcome finitude and live in a state of perfect integrity with the ground of all being. The biblical story of the fall and atonement, which posits Adam and Eve's original sin as the moment of estrangement and the Kingdom of God as the point of reconciliation, is one of the most familiar Western expressions of this symbolism. Bellamy's utopia offers a more directly

¹⁸³ Tillich, *Courage*, 111.

political version of the same basic metaphor, wherein the domination of wage-labor by capital represents human estrangement from divine being and the Great Revolution marks “a sort of second creation of man.”¹⁸⁴

Through Tillich I argue that Bellamy locates the root of freedom in the condition of alienation itself, in the existential rift between that which is finite and that which is infinite within human being. Bellamy maintains that we share an essential identity with universal being that, although obscured within historical time by the finite conditions of existence, ultimately eclipses our existential experience of isolation. This “dual life,” he says, allows the individual to temporarily transcend the narrow interests and dramas of the personality and inhabit the impersonal perspective of universal being. It is this capacity for abstraction that, according to Tillich, engenders freedom in two complementary ways: first, it grants freedom in its passive aspect by granting the possibility for human being to infinitely transcend the given; second, it enables the enactment and practice of freedom when this capacity for transcendence is used deliberately in pursuit of overcoming internal divisions, integrating and strengthening the will.

Tillich’s dialectic of freedom is an adaptation of Nietzsche’s will-to-power, which he reads as a metaphor for the drive of everything living to affirm itself through the continual overcoming of internal and external sources of alienation. Reading Bellamy in the same way, we can see that his theology of solidarity connects the introspective elements of political subjectivity with its active, external elements, and that this theology grounds his utopian vision of American democracy.

¹⁸⁴ Edward Bellamy, *Equality* (1897; repr., New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 260.

Utopia and Anxiety

As we saw in the previous chapter, the wage-labor system was quickly coming to define the conditions of possibility that allow one to experience political and even spiritual freedom. Bourgeois liberal theory had translated the antiquated notion of self-reliance into a toothless right to sell one's labor on the market. As a challenge to the prevailing liberal narrative, which disguised the structural domination of the ownership class as the guarantor of freedom for the laboring masses, Bellamy and his ideological allies promoted a new republicanism based on the need for self-determination to become a cooperative concept in response to the realities of labor in the industrial era. They did not deny that creative work is a fundamental human drive that must be coordinated to serve the needs of civilized society. But as far as Bellamy himself was concerned, labor was more of a necessity than it was a measure of civic freedom.

In this chapter we see how Bellamy's utopian flight is both a response to his personal anxiety and a reflection on a much broader desire to fill the vacuum of meaning left by the end of the Civil War, the rise of industrialization, and the decline of traditional religious affiliation. The economic, social, and political crises brought on by the cultural changes of the Gilded Age were accompanied by a kind of spiritual unrest. In "Edward Bellamy and the Politics of Meaning," historian Wilfred McClay reads Bellamy's utopia as a reaction to the nationwide social and spiritual crises of the Gilded Age and suggests that the overwhelming popularity of *Looking Backward* can be explained by its comprehensive response to the various crises that were coming to a head during the second half of the nineteenth century. His novels gave life to the values and demands of collectivist agitators, painting a picture of a potential future in which American society has solved most of these crises and conflicts by re-organizing its industrial and political

sectors on the basis of democratic solidarity and economic egalitarianism. By playing with time as a literary device, by “looking backward” through the eyes of a time-traveler who has one foot in the twenty-first century and one in the nineteenth, the novels offer both diagnostic commentary on the nation’s present and a radical vision for its future.

This reveals the dual role of utopia: it has a critical function, attacking the authority of the existing order, and a constructive function, effectively re-organizing the existing order along new lines. McClay observes that

A utopia is not only an imaginative projection of a radiant social idea; it is also a way that a society confesses how and why it is unhappy with itself. *Looking Backward* did both of these things, coupling a futuristic model of social organization with a searing critique of the social conditions of industrial America.¹⁸⁵

But, he says, the novel was also “a highly personal document, registering the discontents of its author.” He posits that Bellamy’s utopian vision “emerged out of a struggle both personally and culturally resonant, steeped in the complex legacy of the Civil War.” Through it, Bellamy gave voice to the longings of the many Americans who, like him, were searching for new foundations for national unity in the post-war years.¹⁸⁶ McClay suggests that,

the discontents of Bellamy, and perhaps those of his readers, were ultimately far more spiritual than political in character. Bellamy was not merely seeking social and economic justice in proposing the wholesale reconstitution of the social order. He was seeking answers to problems of ultimate meaning in individual lives, answers that would rescue the Julian Wests of the world from their grottoes of sleepless misery. *Looking Backward* was so wildly popular partly because it was able to trade so effectively upon the fading cultural capital of American Protestantism, even as it was transforming that capital into something new and worldly.¹⁸⁷

McClay recognizes that, at its core, Bellamy’s utopia expresses a “spiritual discontent,” a discontent that, judging by the novel’s popularity, was shared by a broad swath of the American public at the end of the nineteenth century.

¹⁸⁵ Wilfred M. McClay, “Edward Bellamy and the Politics of Meaning,” *American Scholar* 64, 2 (Spring 1995): 265.

¹⁸⁶ McClay, “Politics of Meaning,” 265.

¹⁸⁷ McClay, “Politics of Meaning,” 271.

McClay hypothesizes that Bellamy's existential torment has its roots in his "intense religious sensibility," which was a product of his strict upbringing.

As he acquired characteristic Calvinist convictions about the depravity of man and his personal unworthiness, Bellamy also learned that such distress could be overcome only by escaping the prison of one's self through service to others. As the biblical adage expressed it, he who would save his life first must lose it.¹⁸⁸

For the young man, the clearest image of an organization founded on the principle of self-sacrifice for the greater good came to him from the military. Though he was rejected from West Point Academy as a teenager (he had a life-long record of poor health), he continued to believe that "war honored the noblest, most self-sacrificial, least pecuniary motives animating human beings," that it "worked to dissolve the separate self into the militant whole."¹⁸⁹ McClay points to Bellamy's acknowledgement, in an 1890 essay for *The Nationalist*, that the modern military system served as the "prototype" for his industrial army, providing him with an organizational model, along with proof of its practical utility, and a supply of patriotic sentiment for its justification. As a rhetorical device, the industrial army served to channel the unifying energy of the "patriotic instinct" into a new collectivist expression of civic virtue.¹⁹⁰

McClay's analysis points to a consistent thread running from Bellamy's industrial army back through his 1874 essay "The Religion of Solidarity," in which he comes to terms with the existential limits of the individual before arriving at a universalism that understands human being as essentially continuous with universal being. This essay begins as a rumination on the tragic nature of the personality, and its language reveals the agony of existential crisis.

¹⁸⁸ McClay, "Politics of Meaning," 266.

¹⁸⁹ McClay, "Politics of Meaning," 266.

¹⁹⁰ In *An American Utopia* (2016) Frederick Jameson points to the military model of socialized medicine as a potential source of inspiration for a revival of radical organizing efforts by a New Left.

On the one hand is a little group of faculties of the individual, unable even to cope with the few and simple conditions of material life, wretchedly failing, for the most part, to secure tolerable satisfaction for the physical needs of the race, and at best making slow and painful progression. On the other hand, in the soul, is a depth of divine despair over the insufficiency of this existence, already seemingly too large, and a passionate dream of immortality, the vision of a starving man whose fancy revels in full tables. Such is the state of man, and such his dual life.¹⁹¹

The human being, Bellamy says, lives a dual life, fluctuating between two planes--one personal, the other impersonal. Bellamy alternates between exalting and belittling the personality, at one point describing the self as a mere “bundle of mental and physical experiences.”¹⁹² He says that “individuality, personality, partiality, is segregation, is partition, is confinement; is, in fine, a prison.”¹⁹³ And yet it is in these depths of “divine despair” that the personality gives birth to “a passionate dream of immortality.”¹⁹⁴ Bellamy describes these as moments in which a sense of infinite objectivity overcomes or enters into the subjective awareness of the individual:

There are few of an introspective habit who are not haunted with a certain very definite sense of a second soul, an inner serene and passionless ego, which regards the experiences of the individual with a superior curiosity, as it were, a half pity. It is especially in moments of the deepest anguish or of the maddest gaiety, that is, in the intensest strain of the individuality, that we are conscious of the dual soul as of a presence serenely regarding from another plane of being the agitated personality. It is at such times as that we become, not by force of argument, but by spontaneous experience, strictly subjective to ourselves, that is, the individuality becomes objective to the universal soul, that eternal subjective.

In these moments, “we have momentarily lived in the infinite part of our being, a region ever open and waiting for us, if we will but frequent its highlands.”¹⁹⁵ The universal consciousness is available to us, according to Bellamy, when we are able to detach from the self-interested programming of the ego which, in response to the profound insecurity of human existence, seeks to dominate and control its environment.

¹⁹¹ Edward Bellamy, “The Religion of Solidarity,” in *The Religion of Solidarity* (New York: Concord Grove Press, 1984), 8.

¹⁹² Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 14.

¹⁹³ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 10.

¹⁹⁴ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 8.

¹⁹⁵ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 11.

Though “The Religion of Solidarity” was not published until 1940, twentieth-century scholars of Bellamy’s religious thought generally agree that the philosophical worldview he presents in this essay provides a clear foundation for the utopianism of *Looking Backward* and *Equality*. Louis Filler observes, for example, that the essay “contains the true core of [Bellamy’s] future utopia” insofar as it “recommended a sinking of the individuality into the impersonal and eternal realities of life, a fostering of the objective, rather than the subjective, traits of human nature.”¹⁹⁶ However, a more interesting angle is the one that Thomas Sancton takes, and which the dominant line of interpretation ignores. Sancton claims, in an article titled “Looking Inward: Edward Bellamy’s Spiritual Crisis” (1973), that “those who attribute [Bellamy’s] idealistic visions of the 21st century to a naive optimist make a serious mistake.” He argues that an analysis of Bellamy’s personal notebooks and journals (housed by Harvard’s Houghton Library) complicates some of the seemingly obvious conclusions readers have made about his theological convictions.

Like McClay, Sancton characterizes this early essay as the fruit of Bellamy’s inner turmoil, his “melancholy and despair”; but whereas McClay saw the writer reaching out, wanting to be in service to some greater good, Sancton sees him turning in. He takes a less “noble” view of Bellamy’s “anti-individualism,” characterizing it as “a system consciously and intellectually constructed as a reaction to the world-view which had failed him.”¹⁹⁷ And indeed we can see in a journal entry from 1871 that the young Bellamy was a dedicated Emersonian individualist championing the doctrine of self-reliance:

¹⁹⁶ Louis Filler, “Edward Bellamy and the Spiritual Unrest,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 8, 3 (April 1949): 243.

¹⁹⁷ Thomas Sancton, “Looking Inward: Edward Bellamy’s Spiritual Crisis,” *American Quarterly* 25, 5 (December 1973): 542.

a man should above all things act out himself, that he be thoroughly and fully a man....I mean not that a man should cut his conduct by any of the manifold patterns which morality mongers and religionists suggest, but that he should be a law unto himself.¹⁹⁸

Sancton suggests that Bellamy's reversal came only when changing socio-economic forces compelled it. While "in the 1830s and '40s, a man like Emerson or Thoreau could effectively isolate himself in Concord or Walden Pond and commune with nature," in industrial America "there was no safe haven for the individual."

Over time the journal entries begin to reveal his profound discouragement and changing perspective.¹⁹⁹ In 1873 Bellamy writes,

I am weary and could wish to die. If I am not more than other men I would be nothing. To achieve ordinary success would be a wearisome attainment....The old self of my dreams, I admired, I respected, I had comfort in thinking of him. The self I find I am, I am sick of it, I despise, I cannot commit that ill favored life to any, I would be rid of it by all means.²⁰⁰

According to Sancton, the journals reveal that the doctrine of individualism--which had encouraged in Bellamy a certain self-aggrandizement, a sanctification of ego--had failed him, or worse, had proven *him* to be a failure. What they suggest is not certainty but uncertainty. They reveal a young man's private psychological struggles with the consequences of a naive idealism. Sancton says that Bellamy's "faith" in the principles of solidarity ultimately expresses his desperation to discover "something higher and eternal" in the face of existential disappointment.²⁰¹

Sancton suggests that we can best understand "The Religion of Solidarity" in the context of disillusionment.²⁰² I agree with him. Contra the apparent idealism of Bellamy's novels, this

¹⁹⁸ Sancton, "Inward," 540. (Sancton cites the "Bellamy Papers" in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.)

¹⁹⁹ Sancton, "Inward," 542.

²⁰⁰ Sancton, "Inward," 540.

²⁰¹ Sancton, "Inward," 540.

²⁰² Sancton, "Inward," 542.

essay showcases his personal philosophy in a moment of mistrust, where he quietly resigns his conscience to accept the mortification of life and the meaning of finitude. This gives us a more realistic picture of how public and private contexts work together to orient political subjectivity. However, I do take issue with Sancton's claim that the essay "was not a profession of religious belief at all," that it was merely a "system consciously and intellectually constructed as a reaction to the world-view which had failed him"; that "it was a 'philosophy' contrived to eliminate the things which made life so unbearable for him."²⁰³ Even, or perhaps especially, when viewed as a reflection of existential crisis, it is clear that Bellamy's "religion of solidarity" does what coherent theologies do, which for Tillich the Nietzschean just means that it seeks answers to questions of "ultimate concern."

Nietzsche tells us, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, that "What really arouses indignation against suffering is not suffering as such but the senselessness of suffering."²⁰⁴ What theologies do is "make sense" of our suffering, putting it into context so that we can more easily bear it. Bellamy's theology of solidarity rescues human life from the problem of meaninglessness by proposing that the personality is only one aspect of a double-natured human soul. As he says in the essay, individuality is of "trifling scope" in relation to the greater reality of which it is a part.²⁰⁵ He retreats into the universalist concept of an essential unity between human being and the ground of all being. But he does not place this universal or impersonal consciousness in a transcendental "beyond." Instead he suggests that this position is fully accessible to the personality, that it can be inhabited at will, even sometimes without any effort at all.

²⁰³ Sancton, "Inward," 542.

²⁰⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 68.

²⁰⁵ Bellamy, "Solidarity," 18.

Bellamy observes the human proclivity for transgressing the limits of the rational, self-interested mind, for alternating between subject and object. His existential dualism leads him to paradoxically deny and affirm the “self,” and with this, to call into question its ontological primacy. By conceiving of self-hood in ambiguous terms, he is able to maintain that the personality should be respected as a vehicle, but not fetishized as the true nature of human being. It is the impersonal consciousness, he says, that represents the “the larger and far more essential part of our lives”; it expresses itself in “those mental states which we call the noblest, broadest and most inspired.” The true nature of human being, he insists, is as divine as the ground of being itself--a conclusion that leads Bellamy to affirm the principle of *un-self-ishness* as “the essence of morality.” “The moral intuitions which impel to self-sacrifice,” he says, “are the instincts of the life of solidarity asserting themselves against the instincts of the individuality.” While “on the theory of ultimate individualities, unselfishness is madness,” he says, “on the theory of the dual life, of which the life of solidarity is abiding and that of the individual transitory, unselfishness is but the sacrifice of the lesser to the greater self.” While “the individuality would always sacrifice other individualities to itself,” he says “the soul of solidarity within us is equally indifferent to all individualities, having in view only the harmony of the universal life as its exigencies require”; it “impels now the sacrifice of my individuality, now of yours.”²⁰⁶

Still, Bellamy insists that “unselfishness is as inconsistent with undue self-abnegation as with undue self-assertion.”²⁰⁷ He does not reject the personality altogether as Puritan theologians do; he suggests, rather, that we be gentle with it and keep it always in perspective. Because the

²⁰⁶ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 22.

²⁰⁷ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 22.

personality “is dignified in being the channel, the expression of the universal,” he reminds us that the self is to be momentarily transcended but not left behind. In practical terms, the principle of unselfishness trades on and develops an instinctual drive to identify with universal being rather than remain trapped by the dramas, tragedies, and narrow interests of the personality. Bellamy describes practices of partial or temporary detachment that allow the individual to consciously shift back and forth between subject and object, locating and expanding--perhaps we could say cultivating--an experienced perspective. In refusing to privilege the circumscribed, egoistic self, he develops a notion of subjectivity that frees us from a habitual will-to-survival mode and clears a space where contemplative reflection and self-determined action may supplant programmatic and reactionary behavior.

Finitude and Freedom

Bellamy’s sophisticated exposition of subjectivity in “The Religion of Solidarity” contributes valuable insight into the human experience, especially as it pertains to the ethical obligations between the individual and a newly industrialized society. To better understand how the complexities of his theology come to be reflected in his political vision, we turn now to Tillich’s lectures on “The Political Meaning of Utopia,” in which he too locates the utopian impulse in the subjective experience of estrangement. He observes, first, that humanity seems fundamentally compelled to cast its mythologies--personal and political, religious and social--in utopian terms, how it consistently idealizes pasts and futures in ways that cast critical doubt on an always insufficient present. This structure is as characteristic of Christian Millennialism, he

remarks, as it is of the Indian idea of cosmic ages, or Rousseau's state of nature.²⁰⁸ In view of the ubiquity of utopia, Tillich argues that its conceptual basis must reside in the very nature of human being itself.

Tillich echoes Bellamy's claims about the ambivalent nature of human being, using the phrase "finite freedom" to indicate its potential for infinitely transcending the given, even while remaining bound on all sides by the conditions of space and time. It is this "contradiction between what we essentially are and what we actually are," that sits at the heart of human subjectivity, giving rise to the anxiety of estrangement and then, reflexively, to our dreams of becoming whole.²⁰⁹ For Bellamy and Tillich, this paradox is the source of human freedom. Tillich's claims about the meaning of freedom are an appropriation of Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power." In *Love, Power, and Justice* Tillich explains that "the will to power is not the will of men to attain power over men," as it is so often misunderstood, but "the self-affirmation of life in its self-transcending dynamics, overcoming internal and external resistance." It refers to "the drive of everything living to realize itself with increasing intensity and extensity."²¹⁰ In *The Courage to Be*, published two years prior, he described the will to power in similar terms, calling it an "affirmation of life and of the death which belongs to life." It is a self-affirmation that is at the same time a self-overcoming. Tillich describes Nietzsche's concept of self-affirmation as one that "includes self-negation, not for the sake of negation but for the sake of the

²⁰⁸ Paul Tillich, "The Political Meaning of Utopia," 1951; repr., in *Political Expectation*, ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). See pages 133-4 for Tillich's discussion of the cross-cultural ubiquity of utopia. On page 139, he notes that the Christian concept of the Millennium is "the idea from which probably all modern Western utopias ultimately derive."

²⁰⁹ Tillich, "Utopia," 155.

²¹⁰ Paul Tillich, *Love*, 37.

greatest possible affirmation, for what he calls ‘power.’”²¹¹ The will to power acts through the individual personality and is experienced as a process of production and re-production of a self-consciousness--literally, a consciousness of self, an ego. This consciousness is, of course, subject to the ebbs and flows of the desires and temptations, fears and rationalizations of the human animal; but if “it” can successfully navigate this sea of affective disorientation, it surpasses itself, transcending the mask of the ego and achieving a certain strength of will that is the mark of the “free-spirit.”

This strength of will is, according to Nietzsche, what we *really* mean when we talk about “freedom” of will. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he associates strength with freedom and weakness with unfreedom, and identifies a strong will, a free spirit, with a dual-consciousness in which the individual both commands and obeys. On the one hand, “a man who *wills* commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he believes renders obedience,” and on the other, in his role as “obeying party” he experiences “the sensations of constraint, impulsion, pressure, resistance, and motion, which usually begin immediately after the act of will.” But, he says, we “deceive ourselves” about our split personality “by means of the synthetic concept ‘I.’”²¹²

The re-presentation of our dual-consciousness as a hierarchization of desires is part of what Tillich means by freedom. He says that “we are unfree to the extent that we discover divided tendencies in us, and free to the extent that we act as whole persons.” The idea of acting as “whole persons” has something to do with the drive toward achieving “a totally integrated response” system, bringing order to the disparate drives and desires that threaten our sense of a

²¹¹ Tillich, *Courage*, 28-9.

²¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 26.

strong or cohesive will. As Tillich puts it, “he who no longer is able to act from centeredness, from wholeness, whence all elements of his being join in an ultimate decision, has ceased to be man in the true sense of the world [sic].” The vital relationship between freedom and human essence means that we tend to think of unfreedom as dehumanizing, and this is why, politically, “we struggle so for freedom and defend it as we do.” The struggle for freedom is “a struggle for man himself and not for something belonging to man.”²¹³

But it is the second aspect of Tillich’s theory of freedom--the fact the human being has “possibility”--that offers us the opportunity to undertake this struggle. Possibility is represented by our unique powers of abstraction, which give us the capacity “to transcend the given, and infinitely to transcend it.” While “there is nothing given that man is not able, in principle, to transcend,” we are constrained day to day by “the problem of finitude.” Finitude, as Tillich describes it, is a “mixture of being and non-being”; it is non-being presenting itself as the internal limit of being and, thus, as an omnipresent threat that manifests itself in human consciousness as a perpetual sense of anxiety.²¹⁴ Relief is unattainable because anxiety is synonymous with finitude--“it is finitude seen from within.”²¹⁵ This means that even granting strength of will and the possibility to transcend what is given, human being faces constant risk. In fact, “our freedom to actualize possibilities beyond everything given is at the same time what

²¹³ Tillich, “Utopia,” 127-8. (Presumably this is some sort of typo and Tillich meant to say “in the true sense of the word,” though it does appear in two different editions of the printed lectures.)

²¹⁴ Tillich famously argues in *The Courage to Be* that anxiety manifests in three pervasive forms: ontological anxiety includes the threat of fate and death; spiritual anxiety includes the threats of emptiness and loss of meaning; moral anxiety includes the threats of guilt and condemnation.

²¹⁵ Tillich, “Utopia,” 127-130.

threatens us as finite beings.”²¹⁶ Risk is the inevitable correlate of freedom--we are anxious because we are free.

What ultimately allows us to face risk and act in spite of it is courage, which Tillich describes as “the taking of anxiety upon oneself.” To act courageously means “to face nothingness and nevertheless say Yes to the ground of being from which we come.”²¹⁷ I introduced above Tillich’s reading of the will to power as a process of self-affirmation through self-overcoming. As far as this applies to the private will in its attempts to center itself, he calls this “the courage to be as oneself.” But this is only one aspect of what Tillich means by the courage to be. The other derives from the fact that “in every encounter with reality the structures of self and world are interdependently present,” and so one cannot help but participate in a power of being greater than oneself.²¹⁸ Thus, “the courage to be as a part” refers to the second aspect of a two-fold process by which the individual affirms her own power of being along side of and with respect to her role as participant in a shared world.²¹⁹

The problem of finitude, which preoccupies Tillich’s analysis of freedom, appears as the source of Bellamy’s agony in “The Religion of Solidarity”:

The mind is conscious of a discontent that would be indignation but for its conscious impotence, that it should be thus unequal to itself. It has the aspirations of a god with the limitations of a clod, a soul that seeks to enfold and animate the universe, that takes all being for its province, and with such potential compass and desire, has for its sole task the animating of one human animal in a corner of an insignificant planet.²²⁰

²¹⁶ Tillich, “Utopia,” 129.

²¹⁷ Tillich, “Utopia,” 130.

²¹⁸ Tillich, *Courage*, 82.

²¹⁹ Tillich, *Courage*, 89.

²²⁰ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 7.

He gives voice to the feelings of anxiety and even despair that arise out of a “feeling of the externalibility to the universe,...coupled with the sense of utter ignorance and powerlessness.”

He describes “an unconquerable yearning,” “a divine discontent” that indicates the presence of a “restless and discontented element [that] is not at home in the personality.”²²¹ But, as I argued above, he also perceives this deep sense of anguish as a catalyst for spontaneous communion with universal being. It is our impersonal aspect, the one that observes the dramas of the personality with detached curiosity and pity, that represents our “true life,” Bellamy says. It is our “impregnable citadel of being...safe from the mishaps of the individual.” Accordingly, he suggests that we don’t hold life too precious or exaggerate the importance of the personality.

In losing our personal identity, we should become conscious of our other, our universal identity, the identity of a universal solidarity--not losable in the universe, for it fills it.... Be not careful, then, of your goings and doings. Be not deluded into magnifying their importance.

His advice is to “live with a certain calm abandon, a serene and generous recklessness.” After all, he says, “our lives are comedy”; we ought to “play with our individual lives as with toys, building them into beautiful forms and delighting ourselves in so brave a game.”²²²

Bellamy’s theology of solidarity responds to the inevitable dread of existential estrangement by positing an unmediated personal connection with the infinite, by dissolving the self into the whole. By doing so it de-fetishizes the subject as such. It encourages the individual to take anxiety into herself and to live with courage.

²²¹ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 5-6.

²²² Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 17-8.

About Time

Erich Fromm seconds this point in his foreword to Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, where he identifies a "prophetic-Messianic" tradition that runs from the Old Testament prophets through nineteenth century socialist theory--a tradition that portrays human existence as simultaneously a state of estrangement and a state of freedom.

The essential idea of this concept is that man, after losing his primary and pre-individual unity with nature and with his fellow man (as symbolically expressed in the story of the Fall and the expulsion from Paradise), begins to make his own history. His act of disobedience was his first act of freedom. He becomes aware of himself as a separate individual, and of his separation from nature and from all other men. Such awareness is the beginning of history; but history has an aim and a goal: that man, driven by the longing for renewed union with nature and with man, will develop his human faculties of love and reason so fully that eventually he attains a new union, a new harmony with nature and with man. He then will no longer feel separate, alone, and isolated, but will experience his at-onement with the world in which he lives; and he will feel himself truly at home and no longer a stranger in his world.²²³

According to this narrative, the fall indicates the beginning of history, the point at which human-kind is alienated from its essential unity with being; atonement, then, represents the end-point of history when human being will be finally reunited with the ground of all being. As the passage indicates, freedom is synonymous with fallen-ness ("His act of disobedience was his first act of freedom"). The "prophetic idea," Fromm says, is the idea "that man makes his own history--neither god nor the Messiah changes nature or 'saves' him"; it is the idea that it is man himself who "grows, unfolds, and becomes what he potentially is."²²⁴ By re-presenting the private struggle for salvation, which is also the struggle for freedom from existential estrangement, in the narrative form of the fall and atonement, the prophetic tradition reads history in terms of a triadic movement.

²²³ Erich Fromm, foreword to *Looking Backward*, by Edward Bellamy (New York: New American Library, 1960), vii. In his foreword, Fromm asserts that the "deepest root" of socialism goes back to "the prophetic-Messianic faith in peace, justice, and the brotherhood of man."

²²⁴ Fromm, foreword, vii.

Tillich also explains the biblical myth of the fall as a symbol of existential estrangement “projected into the dimension of time.”

Essence (*Wesen*) is conceived as ‘that which has been’ (*das Gewesene*), as that which once ‘was’ (*gewest*), when there was as yet no difference between essence and existence. Then came existence, the ‘fall,’ and this existence is now the antithesis, the disruption, the negation of the original unity of the essential and the actual.

First, Tillich says, we see “the original actualization, namely, actualization of the essence;” and then “a falling away from this original actualization, namely, the present condition;” and finally “the restoration, as an expectation that what has fallen away from its primordial condition is to be recovered.” Here “‘essence’ is seen as belonging to the time of origin”; “the essence of man or the essence of being as such is believed to have been realized ‘in the beginning’ and subsequently to have been lost.” The present, then, is not only the temporal center of the historical narrative but also its symbolic nadir. It is portrayed as a time of cultural decline, with a popular imaginary marked by despair and apocalypticism. However, the third aspect of this narrative--the faith in a future atonement--relies on the expectation “that although we now exist in contradiction to [our original essence], it can be restored to its original state.”²²⁵ In Christianity, the Kingdom of God symbolizes this expectation; but the Judeo-Christian myth of the fall and atonement is just one representation of a narrative structure that has been present across cultures and across time.

Utopia is a perennial construct, Tillich argues, because it represents the essential desire of human being to overcome its own finitude and absorb into the eternal comfort of the ground of all being. While I argue below that Bellamy’s narrative is structurally and essentially akin to that of the prophetic tradition, I do want to briefly distinguish it from certain other canonical

²²⁵ Tillich, “Utopia,” 134.

representatives of the utopian genre. In the sixteenth century, Sir Thomas More famously adapted the word utopia to English from the Greek word meaning “no-place”; More’s utopia was meant to lie somewhere in the wilderness of the unexplored globe. Bellamy’s, on the other hand, is located in the wilderness of an uncertain future and so can more accurately be called a “uchronia,” or “no time.”²²⁶ This concept of “no time” is what introduces the possibility for a temporal narrative. Julian’s location doesn’t change--he wakes in the very same spot he fell asleep 113 years before--but his bearing within the familiar historical narrative does. Bellamy invents an entire history of the future in order to re-orient his protagonist’s perspective, thereby reframing for his readers the stakes of their own historical moment.

A strict utopia like More’s, or like Plato’s *Republic*, presents a static perfection. These are two hugely influential and enduring texts in the field of political philosophy, of course, but both present an ideal that is so far abstracted from the realm of experience (Plato proposes this in a literal sense, More with the spatial metaphor) that they have an easier time generating critique than they do political action. The element of time, however, implies the possibility of a concrete interpretation of the symbol. By embedding the ideal within a narrative that plugs in to the real history and sense of shared mission of a particular people, a “time-utopia” like Bellamy’s is capable of giving birth to new or renewed subjectivities by framing and forcing moments of collective decision.

The prophetic tradition relies on this same “uchronic” imagery to idealize a vague golden age in either the past or future of a “chosen” people. Take, for example, the American jeremiad as Andrew Murphy treats it in his 2008 book *Prodigal Nation*. As we saw in chapter one, the

²²⁶ Albert William Levi, “Edward Bellamy: Utopian,” *Ethics* 55, 2 (January 1945): 135. Levi calls *Looking Backward* “a time-utopia built upon a doctrine of social progress,” calling it “an expression of the whole tradition of progress as...stated in the eighteenth century and popularized in the nineteenth.”

traditional and progressive forms of this narrative share a basic structure: both trade on a myth of national chosen-ness, attribute a meaningful history to the tribulations of the American people, and frame these as mere obstacles on the way to fulfilling their unique mission in the world. That mission, that vision of fulfillment, offers a symbol of expectation for a collective future that can be shared and acted upon by individuals and groups of individuals. Every Jeremiah acts as a prophet, as a storyteller who orients the nation's historical imagination around a pivotal decision that is supposed to define them as a people.

George Schulman tells a similar story about the role of prophetic figures in the history of American race politics in his book *American Prophecy*, which was published the same year as Murphy's. Shulman identifies Henry David Thoreau, Martin Luther King, Jr., and James Baldwin among those whose work has helped others to sustain clarity, stability and strategy in the midst of on-going struggles for racial equality. He perceives the role of prophet as one of public servant; he talks about the "office of prophecy," describing it in four aspects. First and foremost, Shulman says, prophets are "*messengers who announce truths their audience is invested in denying.*" These truths "[address] not an error in understanding but a partly willful blindness, they announce realities we must acknowledge if we are to flourish." And so as confronter of a dangerous will-to-ignorance the second duty of the prophet is to "bear witness," to "testify to what they see and stand against it." This is also "the office of watchmen who forewarn," and "singers" who publicly articulate the shared suffering of a people and convey their hopes for the future.²²⁷

²²⁷ George Shulman, *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 5.

These first two duties of the office of prophecy are especially helpful for connecting the dots between Bellamy's theology of solidarity and his socialist politics. The widespread popularity of Bellamy's novels gave him a very public platform from which to testify against the abuses and exploitation of the wage labor system and its entrenched powers. He gave his predominantly middle class audience the perspective needed to confront the painful truth that their own freedom was predicated on the domination of their fellow citizens. Speaking through Julian West, Bellamy addresses his contemporaries, criticizing them for their ideological blindness and their complicity in a political-economic system that obscures a deeper reality of structural oppression. Referring to one of the final scenes of *Looking Backward*, Wilfred McClay likens Julian to "a biblical prophet who cannot contain his disgust" as he "explodes into a condemnation of [his upper-class family and friends] for their indifference to the suffering all around them: 'Do you not know that close to your doors a great multitude of men and women, flesh of your flesh, live lives that are one agony from birth to death?'"²²⁸ Bellamy makes suffering visible for his readers, making it visceral and emotional, but at the same time demonstrates how arbitrary and unnecessary it is and offering his readers perspective on an alternative way to live together.

The third duty of the prophet, Schulman says, is to act as a watchman, which means to "name danger to forestall it."²²⁹ This was Bellamy's aim when, in the early 1870s just as the so-called Gilded-Age was coming into full view, he addressed a hometown audience in Chicopee Falls warning them about the great danger posed by the emerging "aristocracy of wealth" which, he says, was "every day becoming more and more powerful."

²²⁸ McClay, "Politics of Meaning," 270.

²²⁹ Shulman, *American Prophecy*, 5.

The idea that men can derive a right from birth or name to dispose of the destinies of their fellows is exploded, but the world thinks not yet of denying that gold confers a power upon its possessors to domineer over their equals and enforce from them a life's painful labors at the price of a bare subsistence.²³⁰

He perceived the rise of a moneyed aristocracy as a threat to American democracy because their interests were oriented not toward preserving liberty and equality, but instead toward maintaining a permanent class of wage-slaves so as to ensure the security of their own wealth and power.

Bellamy calls on his audience to look upon their current position through the long lens of history--if they could do that, he thought, then the way before them would be clear. In the final decades of the nineteenth century, when American society was coming to terms with its new industrial caste system, he sets his audience before a choice. In a public address at Boston's Tremont Temple in May of 1889 he asks: "Plutocracy or Nationalism--Which?" He then lays out the terms of the decision: "If the nation does not wish to turn over its industries--and that means its liberties as well--to an industrial oligarchy, there is but one alternative; it must assume them itself."²³¹ Nationalism, he thought, was the proverbial road to redemption; it would have to be if there was any hope for the Republic. To fail to act was to risk a dismal future in which the great majority of the working masses would be totally subjugated to the arbitrary and dehumanizing rule of the plutocrats. Surely, he assumed, the American people would not willingly risk their freedom by consenting to be ruled in perpetuity by a hereditary moneyed class.

²³⁰ Edward Bellamy, "How I Wrote *Looking Backward*," in *The Ladies Home Journal*, April 1894 (repr., in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975), 219. In this passage Bellamy is citing one of his original manuscripts from the year 1871 or '72 called "The Barbarism of Society."

²³¹ Edward Bellamy, "Plutocracy or Nationalism--Which?," public address, May 31, 1889 (repr., in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, Westport CT: Hyperion Press, 1975), 42.

In *Equality*, Bellamy warns that the Gilded Age plutocracy was an enemy of the American people and of the nation's special historical mission. As Julian's host explains it,

[T]he money kings took no pains to disguise the fullness of their conviction that the day of democracy was passing and the dream of equality nearly at an end. As the popular feeling in America had grown bitter against them they had responded with frank indications of their dislike of the country and disgust with its democratic institutions.

For all the capitalists' fetishizing of liberty, their government was as despotic and exploitative as any tyrant could hope to be. The plutocrats "vied with each other by wholesale grants of land, privileges, franchises, and monopolies of all kinds"; they granted public lands "to syndicates and individual capitalists, to be held against the people as the basis of a future territorial aristocracy with tributary populations of peasants." Worse yet, they entreated the police, as well as the local and federal militias, to act as their private security forces, protecting corporate interests from the public.²³² When faced with a picture of the disastrous alternative, the Great Revolution began to look irresistible.

Finally, Shulman calls the office of prophecy the office of singers, of those who "ask and answer the question, What is the meaning of our suffering?" It is the role of the prophet, he says, to "help people endure catastrophe and exile by *poetry* that endows a painful history with meaning"; it is their speech that gives voice to a people's "traumatic loss and hopes of redemption."²³³ In his novels Bellamy takes on the function of the singer, "making sense" of the unnecessary suffering of his fellow citizens by conferring world-historical significance to their struggle. He tells a story in which the inequality and turmoil of the Gilded Age is merely a stepping-stone on the road to achieving a more authentically democratic society. He reorients his audience toward a vision of the civic ideal based around a radical demand for solidarity; and by

²³² Bellamy, *Equality*, 323-4.

²³³ Shulman, *American Prophecy*, 5-6.

setting his utopia in the not-very-distant-at-all future, his narrative conveys a sense of urgency and functions as a political call to action. In the spirit of secular revival, which I described in chapter one, he utilizes language and imagery that flirts both with post-millennial eschatology and evolutionary progress narratives. In “Plutocracy or Nationalism,” for example, Bellamy compares the American people to “the children of Israel in the desert” who “sigh even for the iron rule of the Pharaoh.” But “back to Egypt we cannot go,” he says, because “the return to the old system of free competition and the day of small things is not a possibility. It would involve a turning backward of the entire stream of modern material progress.” He is calling on his contemporaries to actively choose the future over the past, fulfillment over despair, reminding them that “republics are saved not by a vague confidence in their good luck, but by the clear vision and courageous action of their citizens.”²³⁴

On the Risk and Necessity of Utopia

We saw in chapter one how early post-millennial theologians like Jonathan Edwards brought the story of salvation down to earth, positing it as the endpoint of the course of human history.²³⁵ By the nineteenth century, grand progress narratives delivered what were essentially the same set of expectations in ostensibly secular forms. Bellamy’s story replaced the idea of Christ’s second coming with a utopian image of the achievement of the democratic ideal. In *Looking Backward* and *Equality* he constructs a hypothetical historical context in which to embed the expectation of Nationalist revolution, telling a story in which the moral and political

²³⁴ Bellamy, “Plutocracy or Nationalism,” 37, 42.

²³⁵ Even the title of his treatise *A History of the Work of Redemption* indicates the shift. See my chapter 1 for more.

growth of a people is bound up with their economic advancement. At one point, Dr. Leete explains to Julian how

It is not necessary to suppose a moral new birth of humanity, or a wholesale destruction of the wicked and survival of the good, to account for the [social changes] before us. It finds its simple and obvious explanation in the reaction of a changed environment upon human nature. It means merely that a form of society which was founded on the pseudo self-interest of selfishness, and appealed solely to the anti-social and brutal side of human nature, has been replaced by institutions based on the true self-interest of a rational unselfishness, and appealing to the social and generous instincts of men.²³⁶

Bellamy's theory hinges on the expectation that human beings are "good" and "rational" enough to put short-sighted differences aside and gather together in solidarity to defend their common interests. But these assumptions prompt a familiar criticism, even from his most receptive readers. For example, John Dewey praises Bellamy in a 1934 essay called "The Great American Prophet" for "the clear ardor with which he grasped the *human* meaning of democracy as an idea of equality and liberty, and portrayed the complete contradiction between our present economic system and the realization of human equality and liberty."²³⁷ But Dewey also remarks that "Bellamy was too much under the influence of the idea of evolution in the Victorian sense."

[Bellamy] thought on the one hand that the mass of the people would realize the great transitional service rendered by the system of consolidated capitalism, while on the other hand it is implied that those who control this system would be impotent in the face of the public demand that the final logical step be taken.²³⁸

It is Bellamy's faith in the rational order, Dewey thinks, that blinds him to the irrational reality of a chaotic world. He underestimates the tremendous emotional attachment of free-market

²³⁶ Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (1888; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1996), 134.

²³⁷ John Dewey, "The Great American Prophet," in *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953: Essays, Reviews, Miscellany, and a Common Faith, 1933-1934*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (1986; repr., Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 103.

²³⁸ Dewey, "Great American Prophet," 104. Dewey continues, "It is a moderate comment that Bellamy was not conscious of how long the capitalist psychology would remain active, even among the laborers and farmers, after the capitalist system had broken down, and that he did not realize the extent of sabotage, so brilliantly exposed by Veblen, that prevails among the capitalist class--witness the manipulations by insiders carried on at the expense of stockholders."

ideology just as he underestimates the lengths to which those who hold power will go to maintain it.

Martin Luther King, Jr. offers the same basic critique of Bellamy's utopianism, translating it as a failure to account for the problem of original sin. In a letter to Coretta Scott, who had loaned him a copy of *Looking Backward* in 1952, King praises Bellamy for having "the insight of a social prophet as well as the fact finding mind of the social scientist."²³⁹ But King--who wrote his doctoral thesis on Tillich's concept of God--also thinks that Bellamy underestimates the extent to which social and economic problems express, even as they obscure, a more fundamental theological obstacle. He claims that "Bellamy falls victim to the same error that most writers of Utopian societies fall victim to, viz, idealism not tempered with realism." In his "over optimism," King says, Bellamy "fails to see that man is a sinner, and that [if he is given] better economic and social conditions he will still be a sinner until he submits his life to the Grace of God."²⁴⁰

Like Dewey, King thinks that Bellamy too eagerly subscribes to the hubristic myth of enlightenment humanism. He is skeptical of ideological doctrines of social progress in general. As he puts it, "Man has revolted against God, and through his humanistic endeavors he has sought to solve his problem by himself only to find that he has ended up in disillusionment."²⁴¹ However, I argue that our look at "The Religion of Solidarity" above reveals that Bellamy has fewer illusions about the existential "fallen-ness" of human being or about the magnitude of the

²³⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter to Coretta Scott, July 18, 1952, *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project*, Stanford University, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/coretta-scott> (accessed September 20, 2013).

²⁴⁰ King, Letter.

²⁴¹ King, Letter.

theological problem at hand than the comments of King and Dewey suggest. By engaging seriously with the finite condition of human being--that is by using an awareness of these conditions to ground his core ontological and political assumptions--Bellamy minimizes the psychological risk of disillusionment that issues from ideological utopianism.

Nonetheless, these critiques revive an important theme that runs through Sancton's comments on Bellamy's early work as well as Tillich's analysis of utopia: ideological disillusionment. Because ideologies are conditional productions of the finite mind, to commit ourselves to them absolutely is--in Tillich's words--to "commit ourselves idolatrously." The principles of an idolatrous faith, so perfect in their abstraction, play themselves out imperfectly against the contingencies of reality; if one has too fully attached her affirmative sense of self to the success of these ideals, then "metaphysical disillusionment is inevitable" he says. The kind of psychological trauma that results when "the finite object or cause that has been made absolute collides with our own finite nature and shatters" can also have serious political consequences.²⁴² The experience of disillusionment is dangerous when it gives rise to fanaticism. Whether this looks like a destructively dogmatic attachment to the unrealizable ideal or an equally absolutist drive to oppose one's own past attachment to it, fanaticism generates "an abundance of combative forces" including "the will to martyrdom, readiness to complete subordination, and above all... 'ideocracy.'" ²⁴³

Tillich identifies ideological disillusionment as one of the great political dangers of utopian thinking; but we can guard against it, he suggests, by recognizing that absolute demands

²⁴² Tillich, "Utopia," 178.

²⁴³ Tillich, "Utopia," 177-8. Tillich describes ideocracy as "the sovereignty of an idea endowed with divine validity, even to the extent of becoming a substitute for God, no longer subject to doubt and therefore exacting unconditional adherence."

are ambiguous. His dialectical analysis reveals both the positive and negative meanings of the utopian construct. On the one hand, he says “utopia is *truth*” because “it shows what man essentially is”; it reveals “the inner aim of his existence.” Utopia is “fruitful” too, insofar as it “opens up possibilities,” prompting an “anticipatory inventiveness” that allows us to imagine into the future. Finally, it is powerful because in opening up possibilities it exhibits its capacity to “transform the given.”²⁴⁴ But utopia embodies untruths too, Tillich says. It “forgets the finitude and alienation of man, it forgets that man is always estranged from his true being.” It is an “unfruitful” and impotent construct insofar as it “describes impossibilities as real possibilities and fails to see them for what they are.”²⁴⁵ It is this shadow side of utopia, its “untruth,” that presents the potential for disillusionment because, as Tillich warns, it is “into this empty space” that “the demons flock.”²⁴⁶

While Tillich takes seriously the risks associated with utopian politics, he nonetheless also recognizes its necessity. He uses Nietzsche’s concept of the will to power to argue that “only where life risks itself, stakes itself, and imperils itself in going as far as possible beyond itself,...can it be won.”²⁴⁷ For Tillich, creativity is a divine principle that implies the willingness to renew or to reject and replace ideas that have outlived their usefulness. This way, “In committing ourselves...we are not committed to something absolute but to something provisional and ambiguous,” to something that “is not to be worshiped but criticized and, if necessary, rejected”; yet, even within these conditions, “in the moment of action we are able to say a total

²⁴⁴ Tillich, “Utopia,” 168-9.

²⁴⁵ Tillich, “Utopia,” 170-1. When Tillich talks about “demonic” forces in society, he is usually talking about ideas that, in having outlived their usefulness, become a source of injustice.

²⁴⁶ Tillich, “Utopia,” 173.

²⁴⁷ Tillich, “Utopia,” 173.

Yes to it.”²⁴⁸ Ultimately, Tillich--whose political writings are a reflection, always, on his own experience watching the rise of the Third Reich in his native Germany--suggests that the political necessity of utopia outweighs its risks. As long as it is accompanied by an openness to change and growth, then utopianism offers tools for opposing the dangerous absolutism of fanatical political movements.

As we saw above, it is this willingness to act in spite of the risks posed by non-being that Tillich means by his use of the word courage. Leaning into the paradox, Tillich continues: “The positive remains in spite of the power of the negative,” and since “every living thing drives beyond itself, transcends itself,” he says, “the demand for a way beyond this negativity leads to the *transcendence of utopia*.”²⁴⁹ In this sense, “transcendence” describes the structure of life that is wrought by the movements of the will to power--which Nietzsche describes in *Beyond Good and Evil* as “the world viewed from inside”²⁵⁰--as life strives ever to outdo itself. Tillich reiterates this idea in his concluding statement of the lectures where he affirms, “*It is the spirit of utopia that conquers utopia*.” This is not to say that utopia comes into existence as a historical reality, of course (because Tillich understands estrangement as absolute). What it means is that the utopian ideal is “real” insofar as its narratives of past or future are always intended to reflect back on the moment of decision which is now.

Tillich illustrates this by reference to “the idea of two orders” where

²⁴⁸ Tillich, “Utopia,” 178.

²⁴⁹ Tillich, “Utopia,” 173.

²⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 48.

we have both historical reality and transhistorical fulfillment: we have the vertical, where alone fulfillment is to be found, yet precisely where we are unable to see it but can only point to it; and the horizontal, where fulfillment is realized in space and time but where just for this reason it can be found only in an anticipatory, fragmentary way--in this hour, in that form.²⁵¹

This fragmentary fulfillment of utopia, or the absolute, is accomplished by way of momentary interjections of the vertical into the horizontal. These interjections are themselves bound up with the concept of *kairos*, or “right-timing.” Originally a Greek word, *kairos* refers to the entering of divine import or meaning into historical time (*chronos*). It represents “a moment of time filled with unconditional meaning and demand”; it is “the fulfilled moment of time in which the present and the future, the holy that is given and the holy that is demanded meet.” From the “concrete tensions” that are produced in this moment of absolute demand, “the new creation proceeds in which sacred import is realized in necessary form.”²⁵² But even the intercession of divine creativity cannot, in chronological terms, see the ideal fulfilled. Its realization lingers always in the future, just out of our reach.

We can perceive a glimpse of *kairos* in Bellamy’s own trans-historicism. His theology adopts the logic of two orders, uniting the spiritual and the mundane within human experience itself, even while recognizing the necessarily fragmented nature of this unity.

Time is not a vestibule of eternity, but a part of it. We are now living our immortal lives. This present life is its own perfect consummation, its own reason and excuse. The life of infinite range that our intuitions promise us lies even now open round about us. The avenues leading to it, the vistas opening upon it, are those universal instincts that continually stir us, and which if followed out would lead us thither. It is our own dull lack of faith that causes us to regard them as of no present but only of future significance, that places our heaven ever in some dim land of tomorrow, instead of all about us in the eternal present.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Tillich, “Utopia,” 179.

²⁵² Paul Tillich, “Religious Socialism,” 1930; repr., in *Political Expectation*, ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 61. (King’s strategy of non-violent civil disobedience operates by this same logic of the dialectic, heightening tensions in expectation of the world that is to come as a result of their eventual resolution. Of course, this takes enormous faith--faith that the oppressor will refrain from destroying you long enough that you can persuade the people of the righteousness of your position.)

²⁵³ Tillich, “Religious Socialism,” 25.

Time is not a waiting room for eternity; eternity is all around us here and now--in fact, it *is* us. Human beings, as finite freedom, live simultaneously within both of Tillich's orders--the horizontal territory of space-time, ruled by *chronos*, and the vertical territory of divine timing, ruled by *kairos*. Strictly speaking, then, utopia is not before us, but within us; it runs through us as it runs through all of existence. Utopian narrative, in its prophetic capacity, collapses past, present and future into a single dimension, opening up the present moment to the infinite process of becoming. Even ostensibly secular utopias like Bellamy's give world-historical significance to what is inherently a personal struggle against the human condition.

This struggle is the subject of "The Religion of Solidarity." Bellamy observes that although we find ourselves imprisoned as individuals by the profound indifference of space and time, we nonetheless possess a drive for transcendence and an instinct to create meaning. With our sonambulant egos that encourage us to mistake dream for reality, we have a "vicious habit of regarding the personality as an ultimate fact instead of a mere temporary effection of the universal." Forgetful of our own divinity, we are doomed to suffer from "utter and unnecessary isolation." We ought not be fooled into thinking that universality exists outside of and away from us because the human soul already "has the infinity it craves." Bellamy calls on the "half-conscious god that is man...to recognize his divine parts."²⁵⁴

Still, like Tillich, Bellamy knows that expectation *never will* be satisfied by experience. "Above all, disabuse your mind of the notion that this life is essentially incomplete and preliminary in its nature and destined to issue in some final state"²⁵⁵:

²⁵⁴ Bellamy, "Solidarity," 12.

²⁵⁵ Bellamy, "Solidarity," 24.

What respect can be claimed for aspirations after other forms and higher grades of life by those who are too dull to imagine the present infinite potentialities of their souls? When will men learn to interpret their intuitions of heaven and infinite things in the present, instead of forever in the future?²⁵⁶

Instead of taking pleasure in interpreting the ideal in the terms that our real experiences have provided, he says, we too often waste emotional and intellectual energy building up expectations only to have them disappointed. “Much sorrow of man comes from his efforts...to crowd his universal life into his personal experience, to grasp and realize with the functions of the finite the suggestions of the infinite.”²⁵⁷ Still, despair is not the only option, because according to Bellamy’s theology our fallen-ness is also the source of our freedom. Like Tillich, Bellamy believes that finite being holds within it a seed of the infinite divine. This allows him to say in one and the same breath that “the importance of the person” is “so infinitesimal as to defy the imagination,” yet that human life is “a spark of the universal life, insatiable in aspiration, greedy of infinity, asserting solidarity with all things and all existence.”²⁵⁸ Even as he mourns for the pitiful state of existence that as human beings we find ourselves fated to, he insists upon the potential within each of us, by virtue of our more or less conscious connection with the divine, to wipe the sleep from our eyes and see that we already have, or that we already are, that which we have been seeking.

Conclusion

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Tillich describes the American ethos as one in which a willingness to take risks is encouraged by a utopian vision of the nation’s special

²⁵⁶ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 25.

²⁵⁷ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 14-5.

²⁵⁸ Bellamy, “Solidarity,” 8.

mission in the world. By characterizing utopia as a fantasy of redemption projected onto the social scene, his work helps us to link the internal and external experiences of American religious and political subjectivity. My analysis of Bellamy's early essay "The Religion of Solidarity" illustrates Tillich's claim that utopian fantasy is a by-product of existential anxiety. We saw how Bellamy's own disillusionment was a catalyst for his later utopianism, and how he channels his theological universalism into a political universalism, a politics of national solidarity. Even an ostensibly secular utopia like Bellamy's implies a revivalist theology, trading on personal anxieties to produce within audiences a drive to transform the external world; he calls believers to condemn the status quo (and their own participation in it) and then to work collectively for the fulfillment of a utopian promise.

CONCLUSION

The excessive influence and corrupting power of money in politics during America's first Gilded Age was undeniable to all but those who stood to benefit by denying it. Bellamy's utopia was a critique of the cruel indifference and ostentation of the upper classes, which "mocked the popular discontent and brought out in dazzling light the width and depth of the gulf that was being fixed between the masters and the masses."²⁵⁹ In contrast to the "scarcely veiled dictatorship" of the entrenched money power, he imagines a society in which individuals are free by way of their participation in a cooperative process of self-determination. His industrial army reflects the basic claim of the labor republicans who, as I argued in chapter two, based their demand for equal freedom on the inherently and irreversibly social nature of laboring production. However, Bellamy's call for solidarity was always about more than a recognition of material conditions. For him, the desire to have control over one's work points to a deeper desire to have control over oneself in a spiritual sense.

What distinguishes Bellamy's political thought from that of the labor republicans is its self-consciously theological core. By this I am suggesting that the questions Bellamy asks and answers, in his utopia as well as in his supplementary work, have the character of what Paul Tillich calls "ultimate questions"--the kind that persist in the human mind about why we are here and what we are doing on this earth. For Tillich, theological inquiry provides the sort of spiritual scaffolding that constructive social and political philosophy requires. He worries, though, that this thoughtfulness is lacking in modernity. Cast in the shadow of two world wars, his lectures

²⁵⁹ Edward Bellamy, *Equality* (1897; repr., New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 322-3.

on the meaning of utopia convey a concern that for all the expertise human beings have gained about how to manipulate their environment, there is a tragic lack of consideration about what we are doing and why. What utopia does for us politically, he says, is fill a crucial role as a symbol of shared expectation, which is what allows collective subjectivities to form and to take purposive action in pursuit of common goals.

Tillich utilized the biblical myth of the fall and atonement to illustrate the centrality of utopia to the human condition, but his point is not that Christianity holds an exclusive path to the answers we seek. While Bellamy's narrative does have deep symbolic resonances with the post-millennial anticipation of Christ's second coming, what makes it politically significant in the American cultural context is its secularization of this theological expectation into a vision of the democratic ideal. It exemplifies the kind of utopianism that philosopher Richard Rorty says sustained the civil religion of John Dewey and the "old Left." We saw that as it does for Dewey, Bellamy's understanding of liberal democracy revolves around a respect for the will to develop one's self as co-sovereign in a world of free and equal co-sovereigns. However, the new realities of industrial society drove a political struggle in the late-nineteenth century to find new ways of working together toward this ideal. Labor republicanism encouraged workers to educate and organize themselves, to cultivate a new concept of civic virtue by practicing the "habits of solidarity." But for Bellamy, the virtues of solidarity cannot be cultivated through practice alone, unless part of that practice is the theological development of the self.

That is, for Bellamy the political pursuit of a cooperative self-determination means more than just overcoming external obstacles to freedom; it also means confronting those that originate from the core of our individual being. Chapter three built a bridge between Bellamy's

theology and his politics by reading his essay “The Religion of Solidarity” through the lens of Tillich’s work on utopia and human freedom. In this essay Bellamy responded to the problem of existential anxiety by developing an ontology of the subject that honors the individual desire for autonomy even while it dissolves the significance of the individual into the greater power of universal being. By refusing to privilege the circumscribed self as the ultimate reality he peremptorily rejected the specter of the self-sufficient and self-interested political subject that haunted the bourgeois liberalism of, for example, Henry Ward Beecher. As I demonstrated in chapter two, the political subject of labor republicanism, whose freedom is exercised through a process of collective self-determination, is more consonant with Bellamy’s ontology. So as a vital supplement to their interpersonal habits of solidarity, he describes a kind of private ritual through which one may develop a critical distance from the myopic enclosures of the personality. This practice encourages the individual to consciously detach from the kind of reactive patterns upon which cynical and divisive ideologies thrive, and to actively imagine herself as a co-equal participant in a power of being that extends beyond her self in space and time.

According to Bellamy’s theology of solidarity, human beings derive ultimate meaning from their dual experience as self-aware parts of a whole. Here he anticipates Tillich’s claim in *The Courage to Be* about how self-affirmation necessarily includes the affirmation of one’s participation in some power of being greater than oneself. Tillich describes this as a dialectical process whereby the individual takes the anxiety of guilt and social condemnation within herself, renders her desire for self-transformation into a demand for social transformation, and then projects that demand back out into the world. With this in mind, we found that Bellamy’s utopia does what Tillich’s hypothesis predicts it will, which is to universalize the conditions of his

personal spiritual crisis. Its temporal narrative amplifies his private experience of psychic estrangement to the magnitude of the political, in the Schmittian sense, by conjuring the image of a historical confrontation between two existentially incompatible ways of life. He describes a heightening of social tensions that culminates in a moment of decision, whereby the power of the collective sovereign authentically exerts itself to choose Nationalism over plutocracy.

Bellamy's own ideological transformation from existential despair to utopian idealism, which I described in chapter three, helps connect dots in the story I am telling about how theological speculation constitutes the basis of political articulation and mobilization. Ultimately, I am proposing that for a politics to be transformative in some way it needs to have this kind of theological character. This is true certainly for the American context, if not for others. Take the powerful example of the American jeremiad, which as we saw in my chapter one, bridges the experiential gap between private and public by eliciting emotional investment in a transcendental doctrine of "chosen-ness." Denying that it was within human power to earn salvation, due to the enduring nature of original sin, early revivalist preachers like Jonathan Edwards traded on heightened emotional stakes to evoke spiritual crisis in their congregations. Despairing and powerless, members were primed to reaffirm their divinely-ordained duty to obey civic and religious authorities, just as they were called to do.

It was not until a newer incarnation of revivalist theology began affirming the role played by human action in bringing the kingdom of Heaven to earth, that revivalism began to shape what would become the modern Left. During the nation's Second Great Awakening, communities of laypeople responded to the calls of Charles Finney, and others who like him rejected the doctrine of original sin, by spontaneously organizing themselves around shared

devotion to social reform. This theological devotion found secular expression when, later in the nineteenth century, the sudden popularity of *Looking Backward* spurred similar organic efforts at organizing like-minded folks across the country (and world) around Bellamy's vision of democratic fulfillment.²⁶⁰

The frame of secular revival helped me in chapter one to root Bellamy's narrative within a "progressive" jeremiadic tradition. I come to this tradition through Andrew Murphy's *Prodigal Nation* (2009), which picks up Sacvan Bercovitch's pioneering work on the jeremiad to demonstrate how its rhetorical form has been as instrumental to the political successes of the American Left as it has been to those of the Right. The jeremiad of contemporary conservatism, Murphy says, does what the Puritan jeremiad does, which is to seek solace in the false security of an idealized past. Its narrative mobilizes anxiety into political momentum by way of nostalgia, which fetishizes the past even while misremembering it. The progressive jeremiad, on the other hand, "offers a national narrative deeply grounded in the American past yet open to a dynamic and changing American future."²⁶¹ It taps into the same myth of chosen-ness as does the conservative jeremiad, but instead of lamenting the nation's decline from a vague former greatness, it points to the as yet unfulfilled promises of the democratic project as a way of re-orienting public attitudes toward a better future.

The progressive jeremiad is forward looking; in its open-endedness it welcomes risk as a condition of possibility and points to all we have to lose through inaction. The conservative

²⁶⁰ While the democratic ideal is conceptually distinct from the kingdom of God, they are so bound together in the nation's political-theological imaginary that John Dewey indicates their symbolic convergence at the horizon of the spiritual and secular. By bringing divine expectation down to earth and binding it to a specific time, place and political narrative, Bellamy's utopia demonstrates the ease with which the two realms overlap in our cultural imaginary.

²⁶¹ Andrew Murphy, *Prodigal Nation: Moral Decline and Divine Punishment from New England to 9/11* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 171.

jeremiad turns our collective gaze toward a nostalgic image of the American past, which propagates false memories of a time and place that was altogether free from risk. Nostalgia looks backward, Tillich explains, “because it believes it will find in the past, which, after all, it has survived, securities that are unthreatened.”²⁶² Thus, it reinforces an ideologically conservative will-to-security that, in its attempt to eliminate risk by eliminating the uncertainty of the future dimension, also closes down the possibility of creativity and growth.

Over the past several decades, the conservative jeremiad has been central to the political strategy of the Christian Right, which has successfully furthered the electoral and legislative success of the Republican party by framing American political discourse in terms of a “culture war.” The great political danger posed by this mingling of nostalgic and martial rhetoric is that it can produce the kind of affective response among groups of individuals that manifests as animosity, outward hostility and even fanatical violence, especially within the context of a narrative that reinstates some of this nation’s core historical antagonisms along the lines of race, gender, sexual orientation, religious and political ideology, etc. At present, the core message of the conservative jeremiad is expressed nowhere more succinctly than in the far-Right rallying cry to “Make America Great Again.” The vagueness of this phrase is what makes it effective, but it is also what makes it dangerous. When allowed to remain general in our minds, appeals to a simpler or in any other way better past are supposed to arouse feelings of safety and familiarity; but when concretized, they too easily dredge up memories of the contentious and hateful realities that have historically defined the struggles of the American people.

²⁶² Paul Tillich, “The Political Meaning of Utopia,” 1951; repr., in *Political Expectation*, ed. James Luther Adams (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 131.

To explain this I looked to William Connolly, who in 2008's *Capitalism and Christianity* introduced his concept of an “evangelical-capitalist resonance machine.” While the “spirituality” of so-called cowboy capitalism is not identical to evangelical spirituality, Connolly suggests that the two resonate or reverberate because they are “bound by similar orientations to the future”: “One party discounts its responsibilities to the future of the earth to vindicate extreme economic entitlement now, while the other does so to prepare for the day of judgment against nonbelievers.”²⁶³ The machine generates a “cultural ethos of existential resentment,” which secures white evangelical voters as a reliable segment in the Republican coalition; and this is despite the fact that many of them are working-class individuals who side with the party of billionaires against their own economic interests. What bridges this class gap is what Connolly calls the “compensatory politics of individual aspiration,” which in exchange for political loyalty offers temporary satisfaction of pre- or sub-conscious needs (for security, belonging, purpose, and so on).²⁶⁴

Connolly's recognition of the role of affective power in holding together an ideologically incoherent political coalition is important. But his vague gestures toward “Christianity” and “spirituality” indicate his deemphasis on context and narrative, which also means he underestimates the meaningful roles played by individual agency and shared belief at all levels of political decision-making. I argued in my introduction that triggering is anti-political in and of itself and so must be understood in terms of its relationship to persuasion. While persuasion includes unconscious elements, it can also be self-conscious about the fact that its affective

²⁶³ William Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 48-9.

²⁶⁴ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity*, 36.

power might come from its embeddedness within the kind of theological narratives that assign transcendental meaning to the historical experiences of particular communities. In the American context this includes Christian theologies, although is not limited to them. In the story I told about Bellamy, for example, I developed resonances between post-millennialism and the material progress narratives of the nineteenth century, as well as between the theological symbolism of the kingdom of God on earth and that of the secular democratic ideal of liberal democracy, all of which share “similar orientations to the future,” as I have argued at length in this project.

With the necessary historical perspective, it becomes clear how the contemporary prosperity gospel, which calls believers to identify vicariously with the success of the mega-rich and powerful, reproduces the same bourgeois liberal mythologies of individual initiative and self-sufficiency that protected plutocratic interests during America’s first Gilded Age. As I argued in chapter two, these myths arbitrarily isolate the individual from a meaningful role as a citizen and participant in the community by concealing the interdependent nature of social reproduction. In this new Gilded Age the sense of isolation becomes ever more profound as the mythologies that for so long sustained collective expectations of “the good life” are collapsing under the heavy socio-economic realities of neoliberal capitalism. As the experience of precarity becomes more common so does a pervasive anxiety, which itself breeds a political climate of enmity and resentment. These circumstances make it exponentially easier--both psychologically and ideologically--for a dominant group to scapegoat, dehumanize and persecute all those they perceive as “other.”

A cynical divide and conquer strategy exploits the fears and anxieties of the masses to further the political and especially the economic interests of the plutocratic ruling class. In

response to the extreme inequality and disunity of America's first Gilded Age, we saw the rise of a powerful counter-discourse of solidarity in which national myths were called upon as a way to re-embed the individual into her meaningful role as citizen and participant in the community. For his part, Bellamy does this by adapting the transcendental form of post-millennial theology, with its expectation of an advancing kingdom of heaven on earth, into a vision of utopian political expectation meant to imbue the worldly struggle for freedom and equality with a sense of divine import. Consistent with his role as a prophet of America's civil religion, Bellamy reorients the public frame around controversial questions, awakening popular inquiry into contentious aspects of the ruling ideology that his readers, who were predominantly white, middle-class Christians, had up until that point been privileged enough to take for granted. By framing "ultimate meaning" within the context of a trans-generational project of nationhood, Bellamy calls on his audience to personally invest in the political struggle against capitalist domination.

If, as I have been arguing, the greatest political value of Bellamy's utopia derives from its role as a symbol of expectation, from its capacity to move public discussion on the changing moral economy of the nation, then this returns me to the same question that drove my introduction: Does the lack of utopia in this new Gilded Age indicate a collective resignation of the struggle for freedom?

Richard Rorty's important book *Achieving Our Country* (1998) speculates about this. Rorty's critique of the contemporary American Left revolves around his claim that they have abandoned the vital utopian orientation that sustained the civil religion of Dewey, Whitman, and

what he calls the pre-sixties reformist Left. While the new “intellectual Left” has done much to combat the “interpersonal sadisms” that attend racism, sexism, homophobia and other exclusionary ideologies, their shift to an almost exclusively critical and cultural orientation over the second half of the twentieth century has disarmed them politically. However right they are to remain suspicious of narratives of progress and exceptionalism, Rorty expresses a strong apprehension that without reference to an ideal, the future of critique is impotent at best and self-destructive at worst. Suffocating under the weight of national historical guilt, he describes how the ideology of the Left has veered from a kind of secular utopian faith in the democratic ideal into a cynical politics of despair and detachment.

The great danger in this, as we are experiencing now, is that this new Left may find itself powerless in the face of an increasingly reactionary and illiberal Right. If it wants to counter the divisive and individualistic rhetoric that protects powerful interests then, to borrow Tillich’s language, the Left needs to summon the courage to take guilt and despair into itself, transform it, and return to the public with a positive vision of democratic solidarity. What made the Left powerful in the past, Rorty says, and what it must recover in this historical moment, is a willingness to embrace the utopian aspirations of the democratic ideal. We can begin to do this, Connolly suggests, by reworking “the liberal-radical distinction between secular public life and religious private life”; and “as part of that process,” he says, “we must acknowledge actively and publicly the multifaceted role that faith plays in our own existential assumptions, identifications, and economic projections.”²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity*, 35.

Here we can learn from the path taken by Bellamy, whose early existential despair comes to inform the committed idealism of his later utopia. In every question and answer, he allows the theological element to move him; his queries resonate broadly among his contemporaries because his story is a familiar one about the ultimate meaning of the American democratic project. These are the kinds of existential questions that we are going to have to ask and answer publicly, as Bellamy did, because without some understanding of our collective expectations for the future we are bound to repeat the political mistakes of our past.

CITED LITERATURE

- Arendt, Hannah. "Lying in Politics." In *Crises of the Republic*, 1-49. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972.
- Beecher, Henry Ward. "Industry and Idleness." *Wellman's Miscellany*, January 1873.
- Beecher, Henry Ward. "The Strike and Its Lessons." *Christian Union*, August 8, 1877.
- Bellamy, Edward. *Equality*. 1897; Reprint, New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007.
- Bellamy, Edward. "How I Wrote *Looking Backward*." *The Ladies Home Journal*, April 1894. Reprinted in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, 217-228. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975.
- Bellamy, Edward. *Looking Backward*. 1888; Reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1996.
- Bellamy, Edward. "Looking Forward." *The Nationalist*, December 1889. Reprinted in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, 173-178. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975.
- Bellamy, Edward. "Nationalism--Principles, Purposes." Address delivered December 19, 1889. Reprinted in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, 53-71. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975.
- Bellamy, Edward. "Plutocracy or Nationalism--Which?" Address delivered May 31, 1889. Reprinted in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, 33-51. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975.
- Bellamy, Edward. "The Programme of the Nationalists." *The Forum*, March 1894. Reprinted in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, 151-167. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975.
- Bellamy, Edward. "The Religion of Solidarity." In *The Religion of Solidarity*, 5-26. New York: Concord Grove Press, 1984.
- Bellamy, Edward. "Some Misconceptions of Nationalism." *The Christian Union*, November 13, 1890. Reprinted in *Edward Bellamy Speaks Again! Articles--Public Addresses--Lectures*, 121-130. Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1975.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Buchanan, Patrick. "Culture War Speech." Address to the Republican National Convention in Houston, TX, August 17, 1992: <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/buchanan-culture-war-speech-speech-text/> (accessed May 20, 2017).
- Buhle, Mari Jo. *Women and American Socialism: 1870-1920*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981.
- Carter, Heath. "Why We're Not in a New Gilded Age." *Religion and Politics* (blog), Washington University, February 9, 2016: <http://religionandpolitics.org/2016/02/09/why-were-not-in-a-new-gilded-age/> (accessed March 15, 2017).

- Connolly, William. *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Connor, George E. "The Awakening of Edward Bellamy." *Utopian Studies* 11, 1 (2000): 38-50.
- Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Dewey, John. "The Ethics of Democracy." In *The Early Works of John Dewey, 1882-1898: Early Essays and Leibniz's New Essays*, 227-250. Edited by Jo Ann Boydston. 1969; Reprint, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
- Dewey, John. "The Great American Prophet." In *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953: Essays, Reviews, Miscellany, and a Common Faith, 1933-1934*, 102-106. Edited by Jo Ann Boydston. 1986; Reprint, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
- Edwards, Jonathan. *A History of the Work of Redemption: Vol. 9 of The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. Edited by John F. Wilson. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Filler, Louis. "Edward Bellamy and the Spiritual Unrest." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 8, 3 (April 1949): 239-249.
- Franklin, John Hope. "Edward Bellamy and the Nationalist Movement." *The New England Quarterly* 11, 4 (December 1938): 739-772.
- Fromm, Erich. Foreword to *Looking Backward*, by Edward Bellamy, v-xx. New York: New American Library, 1960.
- Fuller, Robert C. *Religious Revolutionaries: The Rebels Who Reshaped American Religion*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004.
- Gourevitch, Alex. *From Slavery to Cooperative Commonwealth*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Hafner, Josh. "Meet the evangelicals who prophesied a Trump win," *USA Today*, November 10, 2016: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2016/11/10/meet-evangelicals-prophesied-trump-win/93575144/> (accessed March 3, 2017).
- Hemmings, Clare. "Invoking Affect: Cultural theory and the ontological turn." *Cultural Studies* 19, 5 (September 2005): 548-567.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. Letter to Coretta Scott, July 18, 1952. *The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project*, Stanford University: <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/coretta-scott> (accessed September 20, 2013).
- Krugman, Paul. "Why We're in a New Gilded Age." *The New York Review of Books*, May 8, 2014. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/05/08/thomas-piketty-new-gilded-age/> (accessed March 15, 2017).
- Levi, Albert William. "Edward Bellamy: Utopian." *Ethics* 55, 2 (January 1945): 131-144.
- Leys, Ruth. "The Turn to Affect: A Critique." *Critical Inquiry* 37, 3 (Spring 2011): 434-472.

- McClay, Wilfred M. "Edward Bellamy and the Politics of Meaning." *American Scholar* 64, 2 (Spring 1995): 264-271.
- Mill, John Stuart. "On Liberty." In *The Basic Writings of John Stuart Mill*, 3-119. New York: The Modern Library, 2002.
- Miller, Perry. *Jonathan Edwards*. 1949; Reprint, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2005.
- Moorhead, James H. "Between Progress and Apocalypse: A Reassessment of Millennialism in American Religious Thought, 1800-1880." *The Journal of American History* 71, 3 (December 1984): 524-542.
- Morgan, Arthur. *Edward Bellamy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1944.
- Murphy, Andrew. *Prodigal Nation: Moral Decline and Divine Punishment from New England to 9/11*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Edited by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Edited by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- O'Hehir, Andrew. "The New Gilded Age: A bigger con job than the first one," *Salon*, April 26, 2014: http://www.salon.com/2014/04/26/the_new_gilded_age_a_bigger_con_job_than_the_first_one/ (accessed March 15, 2017).
- Olson, Theodore. *Millennialism, Utopianism, and Progress*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.
- Quint, Howard. *The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement*. 1953; Reprint, Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964.
- Reich, Robert. "Antitrust in the New Gilded Age," personal blog post, April 16, 2014. <http://robertreich.org/post/82938136466> (accessed March 15, 2017).
- Rorty, Richard. *Achieving Our Country*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Rorty, Richard. "From Philosophy to Postphilosophy." In *Take care of truth and freedom will take care of itself: interviews with Richard Rorty*, 18-27. Edited by Eduardo Mendieta. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.
- Rosemont, Franklin. "Bellamy's Radicalism Reclaimed." In *Looking Backward, 1888-1888: Essays on Edward Bellamy*, 147-209. Edited by Daphne Patai. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- Sancton, Thomas. "Looking Inward: Edward Bellamy's Spiritual Crisis." *American Quarterly* 25, 5 (December 1973): 538-557.
- Sanders, Bernie. Interviewed by Josh Fox, *The Bernie Sanders Show* on Youtube, April 19, 2017: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24-UaK6vpcQ> (accessed April 19, 2017).
- Sargent, Lyman Tower. "Themes in Utopian Fiction Before Wells." *Science Fiction Studies* 3, 3 (November 1976): 275-282.

- Schiffman, Joseph. "Edward Bellamy's Religious Thought." *PMLA* 68, 4 (September 1953), 716-732.
- Sharlet, Jeff. "Donald Trump: American Preacher," *The New York Times*, April 12, 2016: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/17/magazine/donald-trump-american-preacher.html> (accessed March 9, 2017).
- Shklar, Judith N. *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Shulman, George. *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Smith, David E. "Millenarian Scholarship in America." *American Quarterly* 17, 3 (Fall 1965): 535-49.
- Smith, Gregory A. and Jessica Martinez. "How the faithful voted: a preliminary 2016 analysis," *Pew Research Center*, November 9, 2016: <http://www.people-press.org/2004/12/06/religion-and-the-presidential-vote/>; http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/ft_16-11-09_relig_exitpoll_religrace/ (accessed March 3, 2017).
- Smith, Timothy L. *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War*. New York: Harper & Row, 1957.
- Smyth, Newman. "Social Problems in the Pulpit, Sermon I: The Claims of Labor." *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly*, April 1885.
- Smyth, Newman. "Social Problems in the Pulpit, Sermon II: Use and Abuse of Capital." *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly*, May 1885.
- Spross, Jeff. "You're Hired!" *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* 44 (Spring 2017): <http://democracyjournal.org/magazine/44/youre-hired/> (accessed March 31, 2017).
- Spurgeon Hall, Richard A. "The Religious Ethics of Edward Bellamy and Jonathan Edwards." *Utopian Studies* 8, 2 (1997): 13-31.
- Stein, Stephen J. "Millennialism." In *The Blackwell Companion to Religion in America*, 215-227. Edited by Philip Goff. Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing, 2010.
- Tillich, Paul. *The Courage to Be*. 1952; Reprint, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Tillich, Paul. *Love, Power, and Justice*. 1954; Reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Tillich, Paul. "The Political Meaning of Utopia." 1951; Reprinted in *Political Expectation*. Edited by James Luther Adams. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- Tillich, Paul. "Religious Socialism." 1930; Reprinted in *Political Expectation*. Edited by James Luther Adams. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America: Volume I*. New York: Schocken Books, 1961.
- Tuveson, Ernest Lee. *Millennialism and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress*. 1949; Reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.
- Tuveson, Ernest Lee. *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role*. 1968; Reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Winthrop, John. "A Model of Christian Charity," Winthropsociety.com: http://winthropsociety.com/doc_charity.php (accessed February 23, 2015).

VITA

NAME: Nora Lee Willi

EDUCATION: B.A., Political Science, University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, IL, 2008

M.A., Political Science, University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, IL, 2011

Ph.D., Political Science, University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, IL, 2018

TEACHING: Adjunct Instructor, Loyola University, Chicago, IL
Spring 2015 - Spring 2017
(Classes taught include: Contemporary Political Thought;
Social and Political Philosophy; and Introduction to
Political Theory.)

Guest Lecturer, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL
October 2016
(Two lectures for U.S. Politics and Elections course;
focused on the impact of utopian imagery in American
political thought, with an emphasis on the late-nineteenth
and early-twentieth centuries; lectures incorporate a film
component.)

PRESENTATIONS: “Monsters in the Dark: Revisiting Edward Bellamy and the
Political Utility of Utopian Thought” (honorable mention),
Department of International Studies, Depaul University,
5th annual student conference, May 2015

“On Theory, Criticism, and Artistic Creativity” (discussant),
IIT’s Infrastructures of Creativity conference,
April 2014

“Surrender: An Essay on the Theory of Sovereignty and
Alternative Possibilities” (poster),
American Political Science Association conference,
August 2013

“Surrender: An Essay on the Theory of Sovereignty and
Alternative Possibilities” (panel)
Social Science History Association conference,
November 2013

“The Masculine and the Feminine: Delusions of Dichotomy
Contributing to our Half-humanness” (panel)
Midwest Political Science Association conference,
March 2011