

Can Politics be Creative? Theory and Empirical Evidence

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In stressing the power character of the new political organization, I am not contending that prior to the age of empire men had refused to recognize that power was an essential part of governing. All that is suggested is that power assumed a pre-eminence as the distinguishing mark of government primarily because the other factors in political society were being reduced to secondary importance.¹ [1]

Christian will-power was discovered as an organ of self-liberation and immediately found wanting. . . . I can only hint here at the fatal consequences for political theory of this equation of freedom with the human capacity to will; it was one of the causes why even today we almost automatically equate power with the oppression or, at least, with rule over others.² [2]

Can power be creative? An empirically discernible phenomenon in the realm of human experience, power can be studied as a universal "force" both empirically (in physics) and theoretically (in theoretical physics and in metaphysics). In physics, it may be defined as "the rate at which work is performed or energy is transmitted, or the amount of energy required or expended for a given unit of time."³ [3] We may speak more specifically of "motive power," which, in thermodynamics, "is an agency, as water or steam, used to impart motion . . . to machinery."⁴ [4]

Political power seems at first to be analogous to the power described in physics. It is frequently described in terms of the distribution or allocation or even simple possession of

1 [1] Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 90-91.

2 [2] Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 162.

3 [3] Retrieved August 12, 2009 at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_\(physics\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_(physics)).

4 [4] Retrieved August 12, 2009 at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motive_power.

resources and capabilities. In a political science primer, for example, we find politics described as "the distribution of the good things of earthly life: wealth, comfort, safety, prestige, recognition, and so on," or more sparsely as "the authoritative allocation of values."⁵ [5] Thomas Hobbes was perhaps the first political philosopher to conceive of power in this instrumental, materialist way, defining "The Power of a Man, (to take it Universally," as "his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good."⁶ [6]

Such a conception of power, however, seems decidedly unpolitical, or at least pre-political. Hobbes certainly thought so, since it was the desire to effectuate and perpetuate their power and their fear that a failure of the commons would individually lead to its premature cessation that ultimately drove individual human beings together into a political unity.⁷ [7] One notes immediately the structure of this description in both physics and political science: there exists a giver and a receiver, a force and a receptacle of the force, an active and a passive partner in the exchange of power from one entity to another. But is this an adequate description of *political* power, i.e., politics, at any level? Can it even lead to an adequate description without an intervening _____, like that of Hobbes, which seems fundamentally to alter the nature of the power that is at work?⁸ [8] In a social field, which is a field of free, morally autonomous agents -to accept provisionally Kant's description of the beings who participate in human affairs-- does this initial approach to the question of power inform or does it mislead? What exactly is it, for example, that is moved by power? And to what ends? And by whom? In what way? Bertrand de Jouvenel opened up such questions when he argued that "we should regard as 'political' every systematic effort, performed at any place in the social field, to move other men in pursuit of some design cherished by the mover,"⁹ [9] and it seems to me that this characterization is a good beginning point.

5 [5] Harold Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: Peter Smith, 1950, 20; and David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965), 21; quoted in (DMark O. Dickerson and Thomas Flanagan, *An Introduction to Government and Politics: A Conceptual Approach* (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1982), 8.

6 [6] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, C. B. Macpherson, ed., (New York: Penguin Books, 1968 [1651]), chpt. X, p. 150.

7 [7] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chpt. XIII, p. 188.

8 [8] For example, Hobbes' materialist insistence that power is fungible requires a materialist philosophical anthropology under the terms of which persuasion --the quintessential political art in a democratic regime or in pre-political circumstances (see *Leviathan*, "A Review, and Conclusion," p. 717-18) is a kind of "change of place" of linguistic markers (*Leviathan*, chpts. IV-V, pp. 100-118).

9 [9] Bertrand de Jouvenel, *The Pure Theory of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 30, quoted in Dickerson and Flanagan, *Government and Politics*, 5.

In a series of articles and books, Professor Schabert identifies several features of political power that respond to these questions and that seem almost primer-like, yet force us to recognize that perhaps the primers are not primary enough, do not penetrate far enough to the core of the phenomenon; Schabert's identification impels us to think more deeply about the nature, uses, and abuses of political power. Of the several features Professor Schabert subjects to analysis, I wish to focus on the following claims:

1. All forms of political order are phenomena of movement.
2. To examine political power in government is to examine political creativity.
3. In all political processes, including the politics of constitutionally ordered democracies, persons have primacy.

In his examination of political power, Professor Schabert does not have to concern himself with distinctions between force, violence, coercion, persuasion, or other shadings and nuances of power. Those distinctions and the difference between what is political power and what is not have already been largely set by the laws that constitute the framework and arena of interaction that is the city of Boston or the site of executive power in republics like France and Germany.¹⁰ [10] When de Jouvenal provided his characterization of "the political," he left the contours of the "social field" open and unspecified. In Schabert's two examinations, this aspect of the question has seemingly been closed: we are dealing with the City of Boston and with the Chancellery of France --two closely bounded and well-defined spheres of activity. Within these delimited fields, "the activity of gathering and maintaining support for human projects" finds its delimited bounded sphere.¹¹ [11]

What does it mean for such an activity to be creative, if indeed, it can be? Human (political) power in the settings where Schabert examines its workings is embodied in institutions that effect how it is expressed, distributed, and how it may be resisted. This is the realm of arguments and debates about public policy, political structures, outcomes, resource distributions, and so on. What exactly, "creativity" might mean in this context is open to skeptical consideration. After all, it seems that the structural processes and bureaucratic procedures of decision-making within institutional arrangements toward the end of allocating scarce resources is hardly a venue of creativity. To create is to make, to fashion objects out of some given material in accordance with a model or idea. Such created objects can be the physical objects of the plastic arts or the performative objects of music, theater and film, or the intellectual objects of story-telling and philosophy. Whether performative, intellectual, or plastic, this class of "objects" does not seem to give us the likely locus nor the proper ends of political activity as I have outlined them thus far.

10 [10] Cf. Leslie Thiele, *Thinking Politics: Perspectives in Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern Political Theory*, 2nd Ed. (New York and London: Chatham House Publishers, 2003), 49-56.

11 [11] Dickerson and Flanagan, *Government and Politics*, 5.

A third alternative for understanding politics seems to hold more promise for creativity. The institutions of power "rest on ideas or symbols of self-interpretation shared by a people."¹² [12] As this self-interpretation changes, so do the ideas and symbols expressing it and the attendant institutions of power that rest on them. The process of creativity that this form of creativity entails is notably captured in Eric Voegelin's well-known opening passage in *The New Science of Politics*:

"Human society is not merely a fact, or an event, in the external world to be studied by an observer like a natural phenomenon. Though it has externality as one of its important components, it is a whole, a little world, a cosmion, illuminated with meaning from within by the human beings who continuously create and bear it as the mode and condition of their self-realization. It is illuminated through an elaborate symbolism, in various degrees of compactness and differentiation--from rite, through myth, to theory--and this symbolism illuminates it with meaning in so far as the symbols make the internal structure of such a cosmion, the relations between its members and groups of members, as well as its existence as a whole, transparent for the mystery of human existence. The self-illumination of society through symbols is an integral part of social reality, and one may even say its essential part, for through such symbolization the members of a society experience it as more than an accident or convenience; they experience it as of their human essence."¹³ [13]

To give the contents of this brief paragraph their full due required of Voegelin several books, and friendly commentators have written yet more in explication of this paragraph. For a concern about politics, however, it seems highly abstract, not at all related to every-day politics. And yet, the politics of the everyday take place in this context in which time, space, and the "settled significations" of our words and symbols --among other things-- set the boundaries of our political activity.¹⁴ [14] Professor Schabert argues that they may also supply us with the means for what may plausibly be considered a creative activity. His book about Boston politics and his political biography of François Mitterand are two accounts of how such creativity takes place in everyday American and European politics in one specific urban location and in the Chancellery of the French Republic. But we get ahead of ourselves: what evidence do we have, once the frame of the cosmos has been set, that any kind of creative act can take place within that frame? And if it can, what are its nature and characteristics? Indeed, the tradition of political theory could easily be construed to deny such a claim and declare the opposite.

¹² [12] Dante Germino, in Ellis Sandoz, ed., *Eric Voegelin's Thought : A Critical Appraisal* (Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press, 1981).

¹³ [13] Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), 27.

¹⁴ [14] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chpt. IV, pp. 100-110.

1. Against the creativity of power

Several moral/theoretical sources would suggest that "creativity in politics" means nothing at all. The two most important of these sources are: (1) The anti-political tradition of political theory and some forms of political practice, in which political theorists have tried to get rid of politics theoretically and political practitioners have tried to do so practically; (2) The Augustinian/Protestant tradition that includes Augustine, Luther, and some Radical Reformers, among others and which understands government primarily as God's way of disciplining us and providing a hindrance to evil.

Hannah Arendt is the first political philosopher to my knowledge who noted directly the long tradition of attempting to flee altogether the creative possibilities of politics. The intent of this tradition has not been to deny that political activity can ever be "creative" as such, but to argue that what creative activity there may be in politics, it is so destructive as to render any positive outcomes at a distinct disadvantage to the negative consequences: "Escape from the frailty of human affairs into the solidity of quiet and order has in fact so much to recommend it that the greater part of political philosophy since Plato could easily be interpreted as various attempts to find theoretical foundations and practical ways for an escape from politics altogether."¹⁵ [15] The general model for such escape has been a concept of rule in which "men can lawfully and politically live together only when some are entitled to command and others forced to obey." The motive for the escape speaks directly to the notion of political creativity as Prof. Schabert conceives of it, namely "a suspicion of action rather than . . . a contempt for men," a suspicion that "arose from earnest desire to find a substitute for action rather than from any irresponsible or tyrannical will to power."¹⁶ [16] The suspicion concerning action, and perhaps with political creativity as Prof. Schabert conceives of it, is that they are not entirely under anyone's control. That lack of control leads to a "three-fold frustration" with political action among those who prefer stable peace and quiet: "the unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of the process [of action], and the anonymity of its authors." The response in the tradition of political philosophy has generally been to do away --at least theoretically, if not practically-- with "action's calamities" by replacing acting with making, which is to say, by replacing the hurly-burly of politics with the rule of one individual, whose activities are under his control from their beginning to their end.¹⁷ [17] One should note that this rejection of politics, at least on Plato's part, was not the result of unfamiliarity with the activity. Indeed, as Sheldon Wolin observes, Plato's political problem was too much politics, too much pressure inside the tiny confines of the Greek polis.¹⁸ [18] It is a too-close familiarity with politics or at least its negative effects, that leads Plato to advocate its attenuation or even its abolition. At first glance, this Platonic model of the single, controlling political actor resembles the picture that Professor

¹⁵ [15] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 1958), 222.

¹⁶ [16] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 222. Cf. Arendt, "Freedom," 105-107.

¹⁷ [17] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 220.

¹⁸ [18] Wolin, *Vision*, 37-39.

Schabert paints of both Boston Mayor Keven White and French Chancellor Françoise Mitterand: both are "autocrats" who appear only vaguely accountable to a "general public" and neither of whom seem beholden to any sort of "assembly" of political actors for their capacity to initiate or direct projects in the social field.¹⁹ [19] The impression turns out, however, to be misleading and mistaken.

The second traditional source of rejecting the creative activities of politics begins with Augustine, but finds its ultimate expression in the theology of Martin Luther. We are all familiar with the succinct formulation of Augustine, in which secular politics takes on a decidedly secondary role to the "civitas" that is the church, the city of God, whose members are merely worldly sojourners on their way to the perfect city of God's perfect justice. At his most stark, Augustine argues that political rule exists to provide a realm of peace in the midst of the continuous war of the passions that describes the city of man.²⁰ [20] Politics is an activity of "braking," of holding back the worst proclivities of the fallen, deeply flawed creatures who constitute the public realm. That is, of course, not the sum total of Augustine's view of politics: one would hardly expect a thinker as profound and as complex as Augustine to have such a one-sided view of the matter.²¹ [21] Politics, at its positive minimum, is an expression of longing and a realm of inventiveness. Even in a tradition heavily weighted with the theology of Augustine, political rule had, by the end of the European "Dark Ages" in the ninth century, become a realm in which the Christian spiritual gifts could also be expressed.²² [22] Nevertheless, we here emphasize the role of politics as the guarantor of a worldly peace so that people may satisfy some part of their greed and other venal desires, for it is that "caretaker" role in the secular realm²³ [23] that largely prevails not only until Machiavelli's efforts to put politics on a more salutary footing as an independent activity with its own dignity, modes and principles, but well beyond the Renaissance into the modern age through the mediating thought, heavily influenced by Augustine, of the Protestant Reformation. It is especially Luther who is the

¹⁹ [19] For example, see Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 17-28.

²⁰ [20] While not the best scholarly reference source, Paolucci's compendium of Augustine's comments is still valuable: Henry Paolucci, *The Political Writings of St. Augustine* (South Bend: Regnery/Gateway, 1962).

²¹ [21] Cf. John von Heyking, *Augustine and Politics as Longing in the World* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2001).

²² [22] Eric Voegelin, *History of Political Ideas, vol. 4: Renaissance and Reformation*, David L. Morse and William M. Thompson, eds., (volume 22 of Ellis Sandoz, ed., *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*) (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 140-141.

²³ [23] One opposing tradition is the seemingly more "optimistic" evaluation of Thomas Aquinas regarding the possibility of social harmony and the ruler as good shepherd found, for example, in his *De Regimine Principum*.

flagbearer of this tradition.²⁴ [24] The two cities of Augustine --the one an expression of the earthly by love of self, even to contempt of God, the other a love of God, even to contempt of self-- are reworked in Luther's theology into the "two realms" or "two regiments" (Zwei Reiche) of the church and the secular regime. While Augustine allowed that polities were instruments for God's use in a Divine ordering of human history, Luther simplified this teleology of history into a pragmatic instrumentalism: temporal (political) authority is ordained by God to thwart the worst of human proclivities and to provide a stable realm of predictable calm and quiet. The relationship between Christians and the public order is symbiotic: service to temporal government and obedience to temporal rulers are expressions of love of one's neighbor.²⁵ [25] Regardless the specific details of this political theology and the moral schizophrenia it entails, the main point for our concerns is the role of government: to curb sin, maintain public order, and promote peace.

Certain representatives of the Radical Reformation also echoed this theology, most likely transmitted not through Luther, but read directly out of Augustine:

"... the government is a picture, sign and reminder of man's departure from God, and ought well to be to all men an urge to retire within themselves and to consider to what they have come and to what they have fallen, that they might with all the more haste turn back to God to receive again the grace they had lost. . . . Over and above all this, because governmental authority is a servant of God's anger and vengeance, as long as it has being it indicates that God's anger and wrath is still over sinners and is not at an end."²⁶ [26]

Nowhere in these interpretations is much room for political creativity to be found. Politics is a restricted activity of restriction. Machiavelli's new yet old argument in both *Il Principe* and *Discorsi* --written as Luther was beginning his protests and published twenty years later at about the time of this Anabaptist writing-- that politics is its own lively sphere of human activity that entails not only expertise and a certain kind of performative excellence, but also human glory, is not on the cards here. While a branch of the political-philosophical tradition and another in Protestant political thought are not determinative, I would suggest that they supply us

24 [24] For the much more positive evaluation of politics and other human possibilities in the secular realm that begin to emerge with the European Renaissance, see, among many recent accounts, Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2007).

25 [25] See especially Martin Luther, "Secular Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed," in John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961 [1523], 363-402; Martin Luther, "Commentary on the Epistle of Peter," [1523] in *Luther's Works*: Vol. 30, Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Muhlenberg and Fortress, 1955-1986), 73-81.

26 [26] Peter Riedeman, "Account of our Religion, Doctrine, and Faith" [1542], in Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline* (Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1981), 259-60.

with a habit of thought that makes the idea of "creativity" in politics a surprising to most of our ears.

2. What is Political Creativity?

Over against these two traditions we find Professor Schabert's insistence that political power is, indeed, creative. But what is made? What end does political action serve? It is in regard to these questions in particular that we may find ourselves wondering if "creativity" --the question concerning the precise meaning of which I have essentially begged until this point-- is an appropriate characterization of *any* political act or activity. Politics as making appears to appear at the very center of that early modern political thinker who seemed in many ways to be the least Platonic in his understanding of politics, seeming to reject the idea of politics as an activity of fabrication:

"And as one examines their actions and lives, one does not see that they had anything else from fortune than the opportunity, which gave them the matter enabling them to introduce any form they pleased. Without that opportunity their virtue of spirit would have been eliminated, and without that virtue the opportunity would have come in vain."²⁷ [27]

Machiavelli's form and matter constitute two classical concepts: matter is given by Fortuna --by happenstance and circumstance-- and virtù --human excellence-- forms that matter. Given the context of Machiavelli's writing, one is inclined to think of the analogy of sculpture; Machiavelli himself points to Leonardo da Vinci's (failed) enterprise of building dams to keep the Arno from producing its devastating floods.²⁸ [28] Machiavelli uses historical examples that encourage one to think in making terms: i.e., the skills of making that are passed on from master craftsman to apprentice: "For since men almost always walk on paths beaten by others and proceed in their actions by imitation, unable either to stay on the paths of others altogether or to attain the virtue of those whom you imitate, a prudent man should always enter upon the paths beaten by great

²⁷ [27] Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Harvey C. Mansfield, trans. 2nd Ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1998), chpt 6 (p. 23). "Ed esaminando le azioni e vita loro non si vede che quelli avessino altro da la fortuna che la occasione, la quale dette loro materia a potere introdurvi dentro quella forma che parse loro: e senza quella occasione la virtù dello animo loro si sarebbe spenta, e senza quella virtù la occasione sarebbe venuta invano." (Niccolo Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, Giorgio Inglese, ed. (Torino: Giorgio Einaudi, 1995), chpt. VI, p. 33.

²⁸ [28] Roger D. Masters, *Fortune is a river : Leonardo da Vinci and Niccolo Machiavelli's magnificent dream to change the course of Florentine history*. (New York: Free Press, 1998); Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chpt. XXV.

men, and imitate those who have been most excellent, so that if his own virtue does not reach that far, it is at least in the odor of it."²⁹ [29]

As his example of following paths shows, however, Machiavelli has a sense of political action, not merely the making of homo faber, which he emphasizes when he continues with an example not from craftsmanship, but from archery: "He should do as prudent archers do when the place they plan to hit appears too distant, and knowing how far the strength [*virtù*] of their bow carries, they set their aim much higher than the place intended, not to reach such height with their arrow, but to be able with the aid of so high an aim to achieve their plan."³⁰ [30]

But are Machiavelli's moments what Prof. Schabert has in mind? What he means by creativity is not systematically spelled out in any one place, but must be gleaned from the various episodes and venues of creativity he uncovers in the course of his empirical studies. Political creativity, we discover, is comprised of at least six features.

First, political creativity is manifested in the originating establishment of a political regime. A government is itself a conventional construct, a "product," as it were, of human action, and arguably, therefore, the product of a creative impulse manifested in a creative act. A political founding, as Machiavelli would agree, is not merely an instrumental arrangement, but a creative achievement;³¹ [31] it is "a movement of creativity, the movement of politics unto its form: the existence of human community."³² [32] This "making" of institutional frameworks for political action occurs at two levels: a primary founding and secondary founding. The primary founding is the usual subject of political philosophy, whether it be the primary foundings of imaginary regimes or of real ones.³³ [33] In the secondary phases, political actors must secure "mini-foundings," as it were, because the power of political action is "not to be found somewhere. It [has] to be made, to be produced as the first creative effort of all other efforts of government."³⁴ [34] In other words, the "creative effort" of any political actor or political regime depends not only upon an "original" founding, but upon the (re)-deployment of political power on the part of a particular political actor so that he or she can use political power to his or her chosen ends.

²⁹ [29] Machiavelli, *Prince*, chpt. VI, p. 22.

³⁰ [30] Machiavelli, *Prince*, chpt. VI, p. 22.

³¹ [31] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chpt. VI; Cf. Arendt, "Freedom," 153.

³² [32] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 251.

³³ [33] An early example of examining such foundings in the form of political action is, of course, Aristotle's *Politics*, Bk. II; Machiavelli's analysis of such foundings in *Il Principe* is perhaps the most famous, even if not best-known.

³⁴ [34] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 254.

These continued refoundings are a form of political creativity, since they entail the reworking and reshaping of political configurations to enable the achievement of political ends.

Third, a political regime as a whole is also continually "refounded," which was an activity that Machiavelli especially admired among the Romans.³⁵ [35] In Hannah Arendt's estimation, such "refoundings" are a perennial part of politics, a continuing activity of activity that continually legitimizes the regime. Without continuous action, she argues, the regime would immediately pass out of existence.³⁶ [36]

Fourth, the governmental machinery that comes into existence out of a creative act is now itself a part of creativity, because it is in human *activity* as part of government that political creativity is manifested, and that activity must take place within a framework of power (institutions) to make itself intelligible and effective:

The appearance of governmental power is, as regards human communities, the ultimate creative act. It turns the communities, products of creativity, into sources of creativity. They themselves continue, as agents of themselves, the movement of creativity from which they originate. Government is a movement of creativity towards creativity. It releases creativity: the appearance of power.³⁷ [37]

Fifth, while the machinery of the government that has been created is a mechanism of creativity it is also a source of resistance to creativity. A desire, a will, or a purpose to act exists, and it finds itself in some level of opposition to that which already exists and is active in the social field. "An actor in government realizes that he or she needs or wishes positively to get 'something done.' But there is the edifice of government, labyrinthian, inhibitive, restrictive. It thwarts the creativity to which the actor in government aspires." To fulfill his or her goal, the political actor acquires partners, or brings alongside previously acquired partners to build a coalition that cuts through the inhibiting forces ("red tape, the barriers of bureaucracy, the labyrinth of institutions, the inertia of officialdom") to achieve whatever end was in mind.³⁸ [38] This building of a coalition or "axial configuration" by means of which a political actor is able to "move things" and use the machinery of government to accomplish some end Schabert argues is a "movement of creativity." As "movement," it is not a single act, but a series of acts that may appear to us as a process.³⁹ [39]

35 [35] Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 1.iii; 1.iv.

36 [36] Arendt, "Freedom" 152.

37 [37] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 251.

38 [38] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 246-7.

39 [39] Cf. Arendt, *Human Condition*, 230-34.

Sixth, then, as should be becoming apparent, political creativity is an ongoing process in the social field, which is itself in constant flux. Because --except in the most absolute of tyrannies-- there is never only one actor, but many (to which we shall return shortly), there are "erratic dynamics" in the social field "evolving around every [civic or political] project." Accordingly, there cannot be a political, bureaucratic, or technical "plan" that is assured of perfect implementation: the "planner" must be prepared to implement his or her plan with all the political virtues of courage and especially prudence or *phronesis*. These qualities of implementation in the face of the flux that arises from both human and non-human variables in the social field lead Schabert to refer to the whole as "creativity." "You cannot plan," he argues, "you can only participate."⁴⁰ [40] That is to say, whatever plan a political actor formulates, he must be prepared, as Machiavelli advised, to respond flexibly to "the times."⁴¹ [41] Thus, a master politician like Mayor Kevin White could claim --falsely in regard to business, in my opinion-- that "the average business has the same priority every day," whereas, in response to the flux of the social field, the priorities of the political actor "change every day."⁴² [42] Negotiating this changing landscape, Schabert argues (again we find an echo of Machiavelli), is a process of learning, which is a "progress towards creativity," that is, towards successful political action.⁴³ [43] If we move this mode of thinking about politics toward a process orientation, we come up with politics as "the process and practice of ruling." Political scientists would therefore be those who study "the workings of governments generally, their impact on the governed, their manner of operation, the means by which governors attain and retain authority"⁴⁴ [44]

What, then, is made? Politics is made. The "product" of politics is not a permanent object, but an activity that eludes us, between past and future, as it were, the moment it has appeared. That is, of course, not all that is made. Alongside action in politics, which is a kind of performance, at least two kinds of "objects" are made in or around politics: the city itself, which is realized by the craftsmen who follow the directions of the "builders," i.e., the politicians and the architects who work for them; and the political institutions that bear and carry forward the action of political participants.

The "making" of politics --whether as a performance, an activity of physical or social maintenance, an activity of building institutions, or even the organizing of the building of

⁴⁰ [40] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 285.

⁴¹ [41] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 313; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chpt. XXV.

⁴² [42] Quoted in Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 218.

⁴³ [43] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 218.

⁴⁴ [44] V.O. Key, *Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups* (New York : Crowell, 1964), 2.

physical infrastructure-- is no random activity.⁴⁵ [45] Looking yet again to Machiavelli, we are given a kind of "political calculus," a rough outline of the general means required to achieve the ends at which a political actor aims, namely the stability, longevity, and reputation of the political regime that has been founded. They are: the prosperity of the people; the favor (if possible) of the people; and, the inter-polity (international) balance of power. Alongside the calculus, Machiavelli provides a series of axioms of action, a kind of prudential casuistry, as it were, for making politics.⁴⁶ [46] The first thing "made" in all this, according to the Schabert, is the political community itself:

[E]xecutive power . . . is intended to define that area of political reality where the representative acts are performed by which a multitude of people acts as one people, as the people of one body politic. The notion implies a movement of creativeness. It implies that somewhere in the process of politics something is "made" by the "execution" of power. It is through the "executive power" that the Many emerge as the One . . . There are the representative acts performed by a few on behalf of the many. And there is the body politic of all, the few and the many, that acts through these representative acts.⁴⁷ [47]

Beyond the political act of elemental representation⁴⁸ [48] there is also the political creation and creative sustaining of the political party, which is at once a "political organization" and a web "of personal relationships" and friendships that, in an electoral system, exists first and foremost (but not exclusively) to sustain the political viability of the executive.⁴⁹ [49] A government is made, and a program of governing is made.⁵⁰ [50] Then follow the continuous activities of maintaining the social fabric and physical infrastructures of the city, and the efforts to improve both.

In saying that political action is creative action that "creates" or "makes" a government -- which is itself not a static entity, but a movement of activity that is, at its best, a creative activity-- Prof. Schabert tries to capture something essential about politics: it is a movement between and

⁴⁵ [45] Tilo Schabert, "A Classical Prince: The Style of Françoise Mitterand," in Charles Embry and Barry Cooper, eds., *Philosophy, Literature, and Politics: Essay Honoring Ellis Sandoz* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 237-8.

⁴⁶ [46] The phrase is taken from Anthony Parel, ed., *The Political Calculus: Essays on Machiavelli's Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1972). The specific aspects are scattered throughout Machiavelli's *Prince* and *Discourses*, which Parel tallies (Anthony Parel, "Introduction: Machiavelli's Method and His Interpreters," in Parel, *Political Calculus*, 3-32.

⁴⁷ [47] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 51.

⁴⁸ [48] Cf. Voegelin, *New Science of Politics*, chpt. 1 for a precise analysis of "elemental" representation.

⁴⁹ [49] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 162.

⁵⁰ [50] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 230, 218-19.

among poles, and thus a process amidst paradox. It is a movement, because it is an ongoing activity of liberty, and it moves in paradox, because to have liberty we must at the same time constrain it and foster it; to preserve political institutions, we must also reform and alter them; to exercise power, we must beware its limitations, and especially its need for a context of meaning and participation in order for government to be power. Politics is ostensibly a process, because it is an activity of action, which initiates and releases processes in which the ongoing initiation and release, not to mention its consequences, can themselves look like a process.⁵¹ [51] Moreover, the process is a kind of "progress toward creativity," which is to say that political actors learn as they act, anticipating or reacting to and solving problems, erecting physical and organizational structures, and guiding the processes of government.⁵² [52] This continuing process requires both "new beginnings" in response to the needs of the moment and "carriers of continuity," namely various institutions, which carry forward the creative responses to those moments.⁵³ [53] An astute understanding of such institutions and efforts both to preserve and to use them are themselves, Schabert argues, a creative establishment and maintenance of a space of freedom, an ability, once again, to act, to initiate, to respond creatively to the political needs of the moment.⁵⁴ [54]

3. Creativity and "Action"

In much of this there is a strong echo of Hannah Arendt's analysis of politics as a kind of action. While it is not at all clear at this point that Professor Schabert would agree that his "creativity" in politics is the same thing as Arendt's "action" in politics, the parallel is worth pursuing. Arendt's understanding of politics as action is closely tied to her concept of political space. She especially emphasizes the permanence that actually constructed and preserved spaces provide for the deeds and words of those who appear in such spaces and whose deeds and words are subsequently preserved for posterity in the records of the poets. It is an immortalization in a space of permanence and retained in the words of poets, historians, and other recorders of deeds that renders specific political words and deeds meaningful rather than futile. Politics is for

51 [51] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 1-3; 9-12; Schabert, "Classical Prince," 240-46; Arendt, *Human Condition*, 230-47.

52 [52] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 218-220.

53 [53] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 224.

54 [54] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 262-3.

Arendt an activity of freedom in a space in which human beings initiate new things. 55 [55] What is initiated in this space is *political*, because it is concerned with the common weal.⁵⁶ [56] While held in common, these new things are at the same time *individual*, because they are initiated by men amidst their fellows, to be seen and heard by them, but for the sake of the common. Arendt reflected extensively on the polis experience of the Greeks, arguing that some of the qualities found there have been repeatedly replicated in the political associations that immediately followed upon several modern revolutions. She concluded from her findings that freedom and concern for what is common among us are intertwined, and not coincidentally:

freedom was understood as being manifest in certain, by no means all, human activities, and that these activities could appear and be real only when others saw them, judged them, remembered them. The life of a free man needed the presence of others. Freedom itself needed therefore a place where people could come together --the agora, the market-place, or the *polis*, the political space proper.⁵⁷ [57]

The isonomic polis --the space in which the citizens ruled one another, where "men met one another as citizens and not as private persons,"⁵⁸ [58] was, of course, a conventional, "manufactured" space. Yet Arendt marshaled considerable evidence that given even a slight opportunity, spontaneous spaces of freedom have arisen amidst diverse circumstances during various revolutionary episodes, and that they would likely arise again, given similar opportunities. In the course of the French Revolution, for example, councils, clubs, and societies came into being wherever an absence of supervening political power and/or an absence of institutional impediments permitted.⁵⁹ [59] Listing a series of historical episodes in several different countries over the course of nearly two hundred years in which such spontaneous democratic societies arose, she concluded that the phenomenon of a spontaneous political action is not simply a tradition, but an anthropological potential.

55 [55] Several pages of what follows is taken from my "The Space of Politics: Wolin, Voegelin, and Arendt Compared," delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, August 29-Sept. 2, 2007.

56 [56] Arendt, *Revolution*, 245.

57 [57] Arendt, *Revolution*, 31. Freedom, she argues, was originally an experience in and of politics, becoming a quality of the "will" only in the Christian era. She argues that this new species of (Christian) freedom is deeply disruptive of the original and potentially ever-available freedom to be found in the action of the one among his fellows that is the basis of politics. That is the gist of the epigram at the beginning of the present essay. Cf. "Freedom," pp. 143-171; *Human Condition*, 230-247.

58 [58] Arendt, *Revolution*, 31.

59 [59] Cf. Arendt, *Revolution*, 239-40, 242-244, 249.

It is precisely the absence of continuity, tradition, and organized influence that makes the sameness of the phenomenon so very striking. Outstanding among the councils' common characteristics is, of course, the spontaneity of their coming into being, because it clearly and flagrantly contradicts the theoretical "twentieth-century model of revolution --planned, prepared, and executed almost to cold scientific exactness by the professional revolutionaries."60 [60]

The phenomenon is anthropologically rooted in a second way: political activity in freedom leads, so the participants claimed to have learned, to human happiness. In other words, the activities and experiences in the spontaneously created and desultory political spaces of the modern revolutions are a species of human flourishing.61 [61] The participants in the councils and other forms of democratic rule noted the happiness that they had experienced and they lamented its passing. Thus, according to Arendt, the "public freedom" of the participants

was not an inner realm into which men might escape at will from the pressures of the world, nor was it the *liberum arbitrium* which makes the will choose between alternatives. Freedom for them could exist only in public; it was a tangible, worldly reality, something created by men to be enjoyed by men rather than a gift or a capacity, it was the man-made public space or market-place which antiquity had known as the area where freedom appears and becomes visible to all.62 [62]

And that freedom was a source of great happiness, a happiness found in public activity concerning public matters.63 [63] This activity of happiness leads, perhaps surprisingly, to order, to a space of political appearance that is not entirely anarchic and certainly not chaotic: "The councils, moreover, were always organs of order as much as organs of action, and it was indeed their aspiration to lay down the new order that brought them into conflict with the groups of professional revolutionaries, who wished to degrade them to mere executive organs of

60 [60] Arendt, *Revolution*, 262. "Each time they appeared, they sprung up as the spontaneous organs of the people" over against the professional revolutionary leaders. (*Revolution*, 249).

61 [61] For an excellent account of such flourishing that especially takes into account the qualities of human beings as animals, see Alisdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1999).

62 [62] Arendt, *Revolution*, 124.

63 [63] Arendt, *Revolution*, 126-8, 132.

revolutionary activity."64 [64] If that is true, then the democratic space of appearances is self-sustaining, *if* its participants possess the virtues required for citizenship.65 [65]

Wendy Brown has criticized Arendt on this account for "eulogizing" in the demise of the Athenian polis "a precious, elite, immortality-and-disclosure-through-speech-and-deed ideal,"66 [66] but the experience of political space found in this seemingly "romantic" ideal is nevertheless a real experience of political note among more than a social, economic, or even self-appointed political elite. In Arendt's spaces of appearance, (political) power is actualized, and such power exists, according to Arendt "only in its actualization." "Power is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence," and it *only* "springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse."67 [67] Equally important, Arendt argues that such actualization, while "conventional," in the sense that people must come together to realize it, is "natural" in the sense that it has spontaneously arisen in sufficiently diverse circumstances and sufficiently separate periods and cultures that it appears to be more than an artifact of tradition.

Such power does not manifest itself as rule over others, but rule *with* others. Accordingly, this Arendtian description of politics and "the political" seems not quite the description Prof. Schabert offers us in *Boston Politics* or his other works.

4. The One, the Few, and the Many

Consider the following description of the "paradox of politics" in the governing activities of President François Mitterand:

It suffices to step into the Champs-Élysées in the early evening after a day of work in the Élysée Palace to recognize the most elementary of our three paradoxes: the paradox of politics. A few strides, and the experience of a transition may be made by which one image of the constitution of the human world abruptly gives way to another, quite different one. . . . The reality of politics is that of the many, each of whom has his own will and intentions, his own routes and aims, his own projects for actions and notions of life, personal itineraries and stations in the world, infinite possibilities in an infinitely free play of human connections, engagements, configurations,

64 [64] Arendt, *Revolution*, 263.

65 [65] Arendt, *Revolution*, 85; Cf. Eric Voegelin, "Democracy in the New Europe," in Ellis Sandoz, ed., *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin: Volume 11, Published Essays, 1953-1965* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 59-60.

66 [66] Wendy Brown, "Democracy and Bad Dreams," <http://muse.jhu.edu/muse.html>, accessed July 23, 2007.

67 [67] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 200.

attachments, dissolutions, agreements, enmity, collisions, conflicts, friendliness, estrangement, dissension. . . . [E]veryone can perceive the tableau: the chaos of human whirls, forming itself incessantly into a chaos.

This is the tableau the prince needs to behold continually if he wants to be prince and to govern. And the prince must also behold continuously, willfully, and meticulously, another picture, if his goal is truly to govern. . . . Since it arises from the diversity of human beings, there exists a world entirely different from the one within which government exists. The latter presents order; the former is full of confusion. Here, stability is the principle, there all is everlasting fluidity. This world is destined for the construction of unity. The world is always but a world of parts.⁶⁸ [68]

The impression of impenetrable autocracy, I early suggested, is misleading and mistaken. Misleading, too, I would suggest, is Schabert's depiction here of a "chaos." I am equally unconvinced that the neologistic metaphor of a "chaosmos" captures what is going on as President Mitterand walks along the Champs Elysées. Is what he observes truly "a chaos of human whirls forming itself incessantly into a chaos"? Undoubtedly there is an absence of *organization* in the "infinitely free play of human connections" here, but there is no absence of *order*, of patterns, of discernible regularities. The impression of chaos may be salutary for the claims of the "prince" to rule, to create order in the unformed matter that the chaotic public presents to him, but the patterns of social life of that public are, in fact, far from chaos or confusion.⁶⁹ [69] Nevertheless, there is in the role of elemental representation the paradox that out of the many must be made one, and that the one has no power without the acquiescence and at least tacit support of the many. Without authority, in other words, and without the ordering of authority, politics is not possible,⁷⁰ [70] nor, perhaps, is settled civic life. But, as Prof. Schabert himself argues, "The political world which a prince governs is anything but a formless vacuum waiting, as it were, for the creative acts of the prince. It is moulded, fashioned, carved throughout . . . all that is formed here in the mode of power is but one formation of power among many others."⁷¹ [71]

So, to whom does political creativity belong? To the one, the few, or the many? In the experience of the late Greek polis and early Roman empire, argues Sheldon Wolin, "The declining significance of popular participation, the losing struggle to maintain republican institutions, the ingenious use of a constitutional facade to conceal the emergence of monarchy, and the growing importance of bureaucracy were evidence that men were now being governed by a power organization rather than a political association." In response, as power became "the

⁶⁸ [68] Tilo Schabert, "Classical Prince," 244-5.

⁶⁹ [69] Cf. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 2nd ed., 92-105.

⁷⁰ [70] Voegelin, *New Science*, 27-75.

⁷¹ [71] Schabert, "Classical Prince," 251.

central fact," the inhabitants of the empire became increasingly alienated from public life.⁷² [72] But is this the situation of Mayor White or President Mitterand with respect to the citizens of Boston or the citizens of France? Again, to whom does (political) creativity belong?

We come much closer to the facts of the matter, even as they are clearly presented in Prof. Schabert's empirical findings and subsequent analysis, if we move instead to Schabert's metaphor of "pointillism."

Doch Städte werden nicht auf diese noch auf jene Weise regiert. Wie sie regiert werden, dies läßt sich nur in dem Modus sagen, den man in der Malerei Pointillismus nennt. Im Blick auf jede Einzelheit gewinnt der Betrachter gegenüber allen Einzelheiten das ganze Bild. Man darf die Wirklichkeit städtischer Politik nicht wissen wollen, man muß sie erzählen.⁷³ [73]

What, in this Pointillist picture, is the relationship between the one, the few, and the many? What does it mean for persons to hold primacy in politics? Which persons?

At the most individual level, direct political participation of the kind Arendt uncovered could exist continuously for more than a few episodes after it came into existence, but it required tending. Such political participation is self-sustaining and self-maintaining precisely because within it flourishes a political instinct to create federative institutions that will preserve a space of freedom and its activities of freedom, even while an opposing will to power may crush it:

The most striking aspect of these spontaneous developments is that in both instances it took these independent and highly disparate organs no more than a few weeks, in the case of Russia, or a few days, in the case of Hungary, to begin a process of co-ordination and integration through the formation of higher councils of a regional or provincial character, from which finally the delegates to an assembly representing the whole country could be chosen.⁷⁴ [74]

If it is true that "political freedom, generally speaking, means the right 'to be a participator in government', or it means nothing,"⁷⁵ [75] then mechanisms and spaces of genuine participation - which means genuine creativity-- are necessary for that freedom to be realized. The kind of

⁷² [72] Wolin, *Vision*, 91-2. "The current vocabulary of political science includes the notion of 'executive power' and this notion is meant to denote the crucible of politics. It is intended to define that area of political reality where the representative acts are performed by which a multitude of people acts as one people, as the people of one body politics. The notion implies a movement of creativeness. It implies that somewhere in the process of politics something is 'made' by the 'execution' of power. It is through the 'executive power' that the Many emerge as the One, that there is *e pluribus unum*." (Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 51).

⁷³ [73] Schabert, "Regiert," 183.

⁷⁴ [74] Arendt, *Revolution*, 267; cf. 246.

⁷⁵ [75] Arendt, *Revolution*, 218.

Romanticism of which Brown implicitly criticizes her is excised from Arendt's account by her insistence that the space of freedom requires institutional preservation.

The American Revolution furnishes a first-rate example. The Revolution had failed to provide the revolutionary experience of political freedom and expression and action "with any lasting institution," because there was, in the newly founded republic, "no space reserved, no room left for the exercise of precisely those qualities which had been instrumental in building it."⁷⁶ [76] The irony of this absence is an aspect of the paradoxes of politics and power to which Schabert draws especial attention.⁷⁷ [77]

The evidence is clear that the founders of the republic had "cherished above everything else the potentialities of action and the proud privilege of being beginners of something altogether new." Or, to use Prof. Schabert's terminology, they were creators who reveled in their creativity. They were equally aware, however, that "if foundation was the aim and end of revolution," and if this foundation was of something new yet lasting, then they could not build an institution in which the very activities in which they had engaged was encouraged, since the continual development of new things would defeat the founding purpose of their revolution.⁷⁸ [78] What this means is that the constitution that was written by the Founders persists to preserve the institutional achievements of the revolution, but that the space in which the spirit thrives that brings about revolutions must be cut off in order to preserve from future political action the achievements of the revolution.⁷⁹ [79] In Schabert's words, the constitution is an achievement of political power and creativity for limiting political power and creativity, or, better, for placing limits on the limitlessness of the processes that human action can initiate.⁸⁰ [80]

Such a constitutional containment may not have been the only possible route to post-revolutionary stability, as evidenced in Jefferson's speculations on a ward system:

The elementary republics of the wards, the county republics, the State republics, and the republic of the Union would form a gradation of authorities, standing each on the basis of law, holding every one its delegated share of powers, and constituting truly a system of fundamental balances and checks for the government.⁸¹ [81]

⁷⁶ [76] Arendt, *Revolution*, 232.

⁷⁷ [77] "Classical Prince," 240-46; *Boston Politics*, 10-12, 266-267, 232-3,

⁷⁸ [78] Arendt, *Revolution*, 232.

⁷⁹ [79] Arendt, *Revolution*, 232.

⁸⁰ [80] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 11-12; Arendt, *Human Condition*, 230-243.

⁸¹ [81] Arendt is citing Thomas Jefferson's letter to Joseph C. Cabell, February 2nd, 1816 (*Revolution*, 254).

In this speculative proposal, Arendt finds the preservation of a space of freedom that was never realized, and that Jefferson himself recognized as a loss.⁸² [82] The primacy of persons at the level of individual, direct representation had been lost to those who wished to exercise it.

In a more conventional understanding of politics and the institutional space they comprise, the question, of course, is to manage conflict, to resolve differences concerning common, public matters. This institutional space of politics becomes manifest as the activities of speech and deliberation and decision reveal their need to be regularized. Such an emphasis on the everyday commonsensical experience of what political space means in a liberal tradition is not emphasized in Arendt's account of political power, but it is an aspect of politics that Schabert must take very seriously into account, since it is so central to the autocratic qualities in the regimes of both Mayor White and President Mitterand. Both operate within constitutional systems that are constructed to limit power, to constrain political creativity.⁸³ [83] Both, moreover, operate in an environment of multiple political actors, "above," "below," and alongside them. Neither confronts no resistance, or only malleable, pliant "material" to shape as they will (*pace* Machiavelli's metaphor). Instead, each works with partners, underlings, confidants, opponents, supporters, clients, and friends, all of whom may themselves participate in political creativity of one sort or another at various times.⁸⁴ [84]

For Arendt, *political* power is first and foremost the product of collective, public involvements. Whereas political power could, for Arendt, only arise and only continue to exist in the kind of space that an ancient amphitheater, a market place, a town hall, or any similar structure that could foster collective deliberation provides, we are more likely, when we think of politics, to be concerned with power as a means for achieving a purpose or end, with calculating the costs of using power, and therefore with determining --in nearly Hobbesian fashion-- who

82 [82] "If the ultimate end of revolution was freedom and the constitution of a public space where freedom could appear, the *constitutio libertatis*, then the elementary republics of the wards, the only tangible place where everyone could be free, actually were the end of the great republic whose chief purpose in domestic affairs should have been to provide then people with such places of freedom and to protect them. The basic assumption of the ward system, whether Jefferson knew it or not, was that no one could be called happy without his share in public happiness, that no one could be called free without his experience in public freedom, and that no one could be called either happy or free without participating, and having a share, in public power." (*Revolution*, 255; cf. 31-33). "It was precisely because of the enormous weight of the Constitution and of the experiences in founding a new body politic that the failure to incorporate the townships and the town-hall meetings, the original springs of all political activity in the country, amounted to a death sentence for them." (*Revolution*, 239).

83 [83] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 11.

84 [84] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 112-126, 281-88, 223-25, 226-240, etc.; "Classical Prince," 250-54; "Regiert," 173-4.

wins and who loses by its use.⁸⁵ [85] For most of us, power always raises a question not only of expression, but also of containment, and especially --in politics-- of its ends. Thus, while a polis or a legislature or a council may be a nurturing place for an Arendtian kind of political power, it is not only a potential pressure-cooker as well, but also not what most of us would consider to be a full rendering of what it means to engage in political activity. And it is difficult to imagine what political creativity might look like in this context, while Schabert shows quite convincingly what can be creative about the autocrat's rule. But in this evaluation of what is political activity, we might again make an error. "It is the obvious short-range advantages of tyranny, the advantages of stability, security, and productivity, that one should beware, if only because they pave the way to an inevitable loss of power, even though the actual disaster may occur in a relatively distant future."⁸⁶ [86] Accordingly, "Political institutions, no matter how well or badly designed, depend for continued existence upon acting men; their conservation is achieved by the same means that brought them into being. Independent existence marks the work of art as a product of making; their dependence on further acts to keep it in existence marks the state as a product of action."⁸⁷ [87]

Here, too, we find a "natural" quality in what appears to be a conventional activity: political action is a cooperative action based on universal principles that can include "honor or glory, love of equality, . . . or distinction or excellence . . . , but also fear or distrust or hatred,"⁸⁸ [88] and "freedom or its opposite appears in the world whenever such principles are actualized . . ." Arendt argues that "the appearance of freedom, like the manifestation of principles, coincides with the performing act. Men *are* free --as distinguished from the possessing the gift for freedom-- as long as they act, neither before nor after; for to *be* free and to act are the same."⁸⁹ [89]

Writing in the tradition of sociological inquiry, Michael Lindsay points out that scholars in that tradition have tended to emphasize one of two kinds of political and social power: the power of a political or social elite (which we find front and center in certain Marxist analyses); and, the power of societal dispersion, or what Lindsay calls "pluralist" power.⁹⁰ [90] In the former, "a single, unified ruling class . . . dominates society," and its members share a common set of "backgrounds and experiences." A tight social network, usually collected in a small group of families, exists among these members. In the latter case, power is dispersed amongst a much

⁸⁵ [85] See Wolin, *Vision*, 402.

⁸⁶ [86] Arendt, *Human Condition*, 222.

⁸⁷ [87] Arendt, "Freedom," 153.

⁸⁸ [88] Arendt, "Freedom," 152.

⁸⁹ [89] Arendt, "Freedom," 152-3.

⁹⁰ [90] D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 227.

larger group of people who hold and wield power a variety of positions of power, through a variety of paths, in a complex, mass society that is too large to admit of a small group of family-connected elites in the way the societies of antiquity and even early modernity did.⁹¹ [91] Sitting atop these two possibilities is the single autocrat of Schabert's analysis.

Which of these three perspectives is the "correct" one? In a word: they all are. In the fluidity of politics, and the dynamics of political creativity, when power in and of itself does not (yet) have pre-eminence, so that we can speak, with assurance of empirical truthfulness, of a "field of persons," we can imagine and speak of a multi-layered, multi-channeled, "movement of power."⁹² [92] It is not quite the performative power of Arendt's spontaneous councils, but it is much more than tyranny or oligarchy. We give Prof. Schabert the last word.

The power of government lay in a multiplicity of movements among numerous persons. It was by all those movements that its reality was made. However, if we should wish to pierce it completely (and retrospectively at that), we would have to search for each movement (not knowing their number and not having traces at all), and we would have to survey each movement (not knowing more than the fact that it had occurred). We would aspire after a "total" knowledge and we would perform but vain attempts, . . .⁹³ [93]

⁹¹ [91] Lindsay, 227.

⁹² [92] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 256.

⁹³ [93] Schabert, *Boston Politics*, 256. It is beyond the scope of this present study, but remains nevertheless a crucial question of the first order to ask --in light of the optimistic note concerning politics and its creative possibilities with which we end-- if Sheldon Wolin's more "pessimistic" view of the matter deserves a further hearing. When he published the first edition of *Politics and Vision* in 1950, Wolin found Americans, in particular, to be confronted by a "diffusion of the political," an era in which "the individual increasingly seeks his political satisfactions outside the traditional area of politics." Politics was "discredited," citizens were "retreating" to society, life was bureaucratized, whether nationally or at the local level, and age-old notions of "citizenship, obligation, and [political] authority" were abandoned without recourse to other mediating forms. Wolin could describe the problem spatially: politics had been "transferred to another plane," perhaps "citizenship had been crowded out by other, more satisfying forms of membership," which immediately implies that contemporary people "inhabit" a different social environment than their modern ancestors did. "If this should be the case," Wolin argued, "the problem is not one of apathy, or of the decline of the political, but the absorption of the political into non-political institutions and activities. This, in turn, implies that there still exists in the West an impressive capacity for political participation and interest which is not, however, being diverted towards the traditional forms of political life." (Wolin, *Vision*, 316-17). We would further want to ask if Wolin's discovery/description of a new American regime, a kind of "inverted totalitarianism" called "Superpower," which remains in part --and perhaps continually-- an aspiration, not a realization, which aspires to supercede American liberal democracy --as Nazi totalitarianism sought to supercede the Weimar parliamentary system-- and which includes the evacuation of political space in several important ways, is a reasonable depiction of the actual

lived experience of American persons, or whether the politics of persons as Schabert describes it remains a viable, lived alternative.