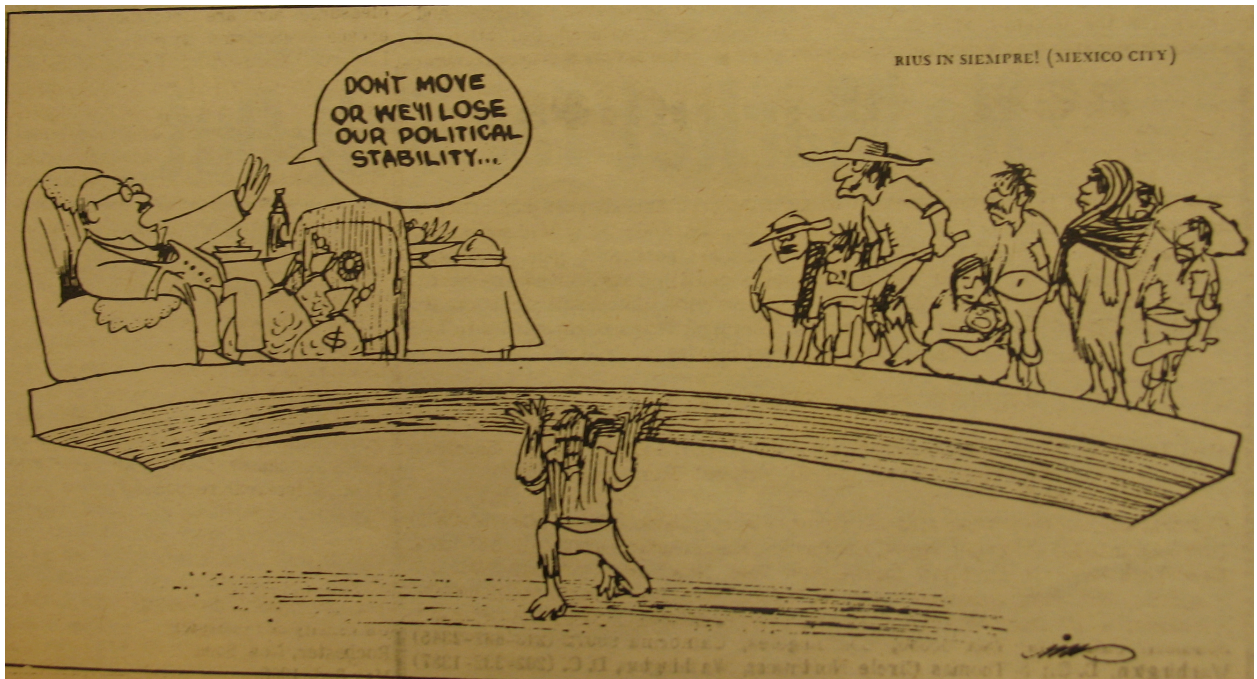# Enough Being Reasonable: Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Moral Absolutism's Contribution to Democracy

A Thesis Presented By:

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To:

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Abstract

Political theory that addresses morality's role in politics most often emphasizes the need for political actors who are moral compromisers. Politicians have a responsibility to serve the people, and they will sometimes be faced with a dilemma: either stick to their personal morals or violate those morals because the political office requires it; many political theorists insist that these politicians should do the latter. These theorists value consensus as a fundamental cornerstone of democracy, and they associate a willingness to sacrifice one's personal morality for the greater good with a democratic ideology and mindset. They typically dismiss the potentially positive influence that moral absolutists, especially ones who are able to build public support and therefore power behind their causes, might have on a democracy. This thesis challenges theorists to consider potential democratic benefits of oppositional moral absolutists who ground their arguments in democratic rhetoric and principles. It pushes these theorists, then, to consider both how oppositional moral absolutists and how confrontation and conflict might serve democratic interests and society. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) movement of the 1960s is used as the central case study to make this argument.

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Preface

<u>Choosing a Topic</u>

For anyone who aims to explain why America looks the way it does—politically, culturally, economically—and how America will look in the future, understanding past and current social movements is of prime importance. Social movements can provide a key to understanding American democratic society and how and why it has changed. They also feature some of our most interesting, inspiring and complex historical figures—perhaps it was these figures who first drew me to the subject.

I noticed that when oppositional social movements were discussed in my political science, history, and sociology courses, professors typically identified a split among movement members: an absolutist and a compromising wing. Movement members agreed that some aspect of the political and social status quo was morally impermissible, but they differed in their assessment of how morally corrupt the system as a whole was—and how strictly they would adhere to their own oppositional values. Compromisers maintained that the system, flawed and immoral as it was in its current form, still allowed for meaningful change. They sought reform from within the system, either by electoral means or non-violent protests to which they *hoped* the government, ceding by choice to public pressure, would respond with improved policy.

Moral absolutists, on the other hand, believed the current system was so morally defunct that it made significant compromise impossible. They tried to *force* the system to change by directly confronting it, as they had concluded that the system was too corrupted to respond to publically sanctioned pressure with meaningful reforms. Absolutists argued that the system was universally and unilaterally amoral, and that positive change was only attainable through fundamentally modifying (or abolishing) that system, its actors, and how we enacted democracy. This absolutist stance often justified violent actions among its adherents, but this was not always

the case: while increased militancy and confrontation with government forces was often the absolutist strategy, some absolutist groups eschewed violence.

The evaluation of the split was usually the same: in my course lectures and readings I often learned the value of the compromisers in oppositional movements, but absolutists were usually ignored or dismissed as violent extremists whose actions were undemocratic—fringe cases who, if anything, hurt democratic proceedings. So it was a relatively uncontroversial depiction of Martin Luther King Jr., who was extolled, while Malcolm X was minimized, or the Gay Liberation Front, and not the Gay Activists' Alliance, which received praise for its actions.

And yet it was often the moral absolutists who inspired me. I became particularly interested in oppositional political actors who gave a morally absolutist critique which, because they closed it to debate and sometimes advocated violence, was in some ways undemocratic; and yet, because the activists grounded their arguments in democratic principles and their anger in the country's failure to meet them, their critiques held ties to the concepts of justice, equality and individual rights to which I hold such a strong theoretical allegiance. I admired their bravery and connected to their anger, and I at times wished that I could commit myself so entirely and absolutely to a cause—sometimes, to their very causes. I wanted to fully embody and live by what I believed, to be willing to sacrifice everything on behalf of it. I didn't consider myself to be a moral absolutist and I still don't, but I was moved to ask: Do moral absolutists in oppositional social movements that seek the fulfillment of unmet democratic ideals contribute anything positive to the American democratic society they oppose? Could they take a leading role, directly challenging and confronting the system in place, and positively influence democracy?

In *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, I found an author who answered an emphatic 'Yes'. Jonathan Kozol, who wrote the book in 1975 when he was a public school teacher in Boston, largely inspired me to find answers to my questions. He inspired me both because of his own moral absolutism and authentic fury and because he too found the lack of radical voices represented in the public education system problematic.[ii] He was angrier than I and sought to change the educational system, while I wanted to address political theory that I felt did not make room for moral absolutists, but we shared a respect for moral absolutists and a concern that many others seemingly did not.

Deciding on a Case Study

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) movement fit my parameters as a powerful oppositional social movement with an absolutist critique and an internal split between more absolutist and compromising members. I was determined to evaluate both the influence of moral absolutists within the movement and the influence of the organization's absolutist critique on democracy. I focused on 1968-1969 because these were both the years when SDS reached its height of power and when it eventually split into squabbling factions following multiple significant confrontations with the government and police forces. I looked through archives of the organization's newspaper, *New Left Notes*, to see what members were saying, thinking and debating. And when I interrogated historical texts and political theory for answers and found them to different degrees unsatisfying, I tried to give my own.

Introduction: Kozol, SDS Background and What's to Come

Kozol's Absolutist Argument in Defense of the Absolutist

Kozol's book is like the work of many of the radicals he espouses: it is unrelenting and angry and uncompromising. He takes a morally absolutist stance against the current education system and the society that has shaped, maintained and is serviced by it. He attacks those of us who are empathetic to causes but lack the passion or willingness to sacrifice on behalf of them. He condemns us for caring but not acting. And he claims that we have been trained to react in this passive way by an educational system whose "first and primary function…is not to educate good people, but good citizens."[iii] Kozol does not mince words; he states on only the second page of chapter one, "I am in strongest opposition to the present social order of the U.S. and, for this reason only, to the lies which are inevitably purveyed by schools which stand in service to its flag and anthem."[iv] The book is a heated piece with a morally absolute tone.

In a chapter titled, "Great Men and Women," Kozol takes on the public education system for what he terms its "detoxification" of radical historical figures.[v] He criticizes the depiction of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a "kindly, boring and respectful 'Negro preacher' with very light skin and rather banal views,"[vi] and that of Henry David Thoreau as "a nature writer."[vii] He argues that these depictions are not, as some might say, an accidental mistake of the public schools, but rather a manifestation of their true intent. He writes, "The government is not in business to give voice to its disloyal opposition. Thoreau is dangerous."[viii] He writes that it is the government's conscious and logical decision to "contain with care the words and voices of those men and women who call forth in us the best things we are made of…[to] logically suppress, the danger constituted by the burning eyes of Malcolm X or the irreverent brilliance of Thoreau."[ix] The passion of the opposition is silenced, or their critique softened until its punch is gone.

Even those historical figures whose passion and conviction do make it into the history books; even they, Kozol argues, are not meant to be models for a citizen's behavior—they are depicted as worthy of praise, but not like ordinary people. He writes that public education hopes to create a citizenry that, when it "looks in the direction of Saint Francis, Thoreau, Hellen Keller, Dr. King, [what it sees] is a possible object for arm's-length admiration and respect, but in no case an appropriate model for acceptable or even sane behavior."[x] Students are taught, "They are too lofty: We are too banal."[xi] Kids learn to compromise on their morals, to not strive to be the next King or Keller, Kozol writes, because "we build perimeters around the[ir] ethical aspirations."[xii] Kozol argues that historical revisionism aims to, and successfully does, produce reliable, steadfast, and reasonable citizens who will not express moral indignation or oppose the government—resistance that Kozol believes we need.

It is because these voices of resistance are silenced or their passion blunted to the point that it can no longer inspire us that we are so willing to live alongside injustice and inequality whose effect is to limit democracy and ensure that its ideals remain only that—ideals that will never be attained. It is because, Kozol writes, students are taught not to say 'No' unless they can provide constructive alternatives, that they later, as adults, fail to stand up and say 'No' to injustice. His book, however, is a book with a purpose. Kozol wants action from his readers; he says that those "people who are looking for 'a lot of interesting ideas,' and hope to dabble for a little more…offend the author and…would do well to stop [reading] right now."[xiii] No: Kozol wants people who "read in order to take action on their consequent beliefs—" who feel that they are compelled to do so.[xiv]

And if being moral means that individuals will have to make sacrifices, and Kozol insists they will, so be it—they should be prepared to make those sacrifices. He writes, "It is not good

enough to favor justice in high literary flourish and to feel compassion for the victims of the very system that sustains our privileged position. We must be able to disown and disavow that privileged position. If we cannot we are not ethical men and women, and do not lead lives worth living."[xv] To Kozol, being moral reigns supreme—it's what makes life worth living; for an individual to compromise his morals, or even for him to not stand and fight for them, is undeniably and absolutely wrong.

Kozol is a moral absolutist who argues that other absolutists deserve to be heard and valued as they are, alive and sometimes angry and threatening. But most political theory I read felt differently. This thesis is critical of and seeks to expand and build upon that theory. It does so largely through the history of an oppositional social movement with a critique that demanded more moral absolutism in politics and expressed fury over what it saw as the willingness of the political system and greater society to compromise on democratic principles and practices.

Brief Background in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS): A Movement Founded in Opposition to the Moral Compromiser

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) movement of the 1960s took as its enemy the morally compromising politician it felt was not doing enough to meet the demands of the civil rights movement; who escalated the Cold War and led the country into the Vietnam War; and who stressed calm and rational discourse when there were potentially divisive and morally-charged issues, and then didn't consider real changes, instead pushing a vision of gradualism that wouldn't rock the boat too much. SDS opposed the double-sidedness of these politicians: they felt offended and outraged when politicians spoke of democratic ideals and then followed a different ethical code when in power. SDS members were tired of moral compromise, of being

told one thing by politicians and then seeing them do something else; they were sick of being excluded from the decision-making process, of a politician in power assuming, like it will be shown that Michael Walzer encourages, that all his constituency wants him to make morally compromising decisions—and that no one could hold him accountable for having made them.

They felt that being 'reasonable' and striving for 'consensus' really meant acting without regard for morality. And because there was a post-war consensus that covered a wide range of political issues, they didn't feel that there was a path for meaningful change within the political system. Both Republicans and Democrats had been sitting down and calmly discussing race relations and foreign policy for some time, and SDS members didn't like where their rational discussions were leading the country. They were young; mostly college students, and they didn't feel like they were being taken seriously, just as they felt that the enormous, fundamentally *moral* issues in front of them weren't being taken seriously.

This feeling only increased as the 1960s progressed. The more SDS protested, the more militant they got and the more their membership grew, the more they saw the politicians in power ignore their demands—ignore their *morality*. The Vietnam War continued to escalate and the police fought back—violently—against student protests. Richard Nixon ran on a platform of law and order in 1968 and saw enormous success. The sides—'us' versus 'them'—became more polarized, more pronounced—more absolutist. What had started as a movement motivated by anger over what SDS saw as a failure to live up to American and democratic ideals became one that now started to question those values themselves and whether they had ever really existed. It began to question larger aspects of the American political system, began to critique capitalism and the class system. It started to speak in terms of war, of revolution—though the seriousness of SDS's commitment to these actions should, and will be in this thesis, questioned.

Within the SDS movement itself there was also friction. The organization's newspaper *New Left Notes (NLN)* was filled with aggressively antagonistic debates over strategy and tactics. One side, which mostly consisted of the Progressive Labor (PL) bloc, wanted to take a coalition- and base-building approach. They viewed the movement's impact in terms of a "prolonged struggle;" they objected to the idea that the change they wanted could happen at that very moment.[xvi] They aimed at focusing on the working class as an ally against the political system: if only they could convince the working class, from which large numbers were being drafted into the War, to rise up with them, they argued, then the revolutionary goals of SDS could be achieved. They hoped to convince the working class that the capitalist system was oppressing them, and they idolized communist countries like Cuba and China. They objected to militant, all-or-nothing protests, instead insisting that the movement's attention should be focused on specific labor reforms and connecting to the working-class community.

The other side, what would remain SDS when PL in the summer of 1969 was kicked out of the organization, was more militant and less patient. That does not mean, of course, that they were all more violent—many members in SDS were committed to non-violence—though they often were, and they believed in sparking the types of confrontations that would inevitably lead to violence either by or against the police. They also supported the cause and tactics of the Black Panther organization, which famously believed in armed self-defense. More so than the PL, they held an absolutist 'us' or 'them' stance and viewed the government, and anyone else who did not hold their views, as the enemy. They were more moralistic than the PL, which criticized them for being less realistic and radical as a result.

In the March 4, 1968 issue of *NLN*, member Eric Mann gave a crude summary of the split. He wrote of a "long-standing conflict among [movement] radicals—the battle of the 'hards' and the 'softs.'"[xvii] He went on to classify and critique the former group:

> The 'hards' are very concerned with maintaining an ideological and stylistic purity, believe that co-optation is the major threat to the Left, and often advocate measures considerably to the Left of their constituency. They argue that the role of a radical is to project challenging programs and analyses that 'radicalize' people's thoughts and actions. The traditional pitfall of the 'hards' has been projecting programs and tactics that are irrelevant or harmful to the constituency they are trying to organize.[xviii]

And the latter, PL-based group:

> The 'softs' argue that a radical must get involved with people's immediate concerns and relate to the existing institutions in the society that affect people's lives. They see the major threat to the Left as isolation. In practice, the 'softs' actually like American society more than they let on. But they often have a better understanding of the people than the 'hards' (partially because most Americans are more like the 'softs'). They find it difficult to maintain a clear radical position in their day-to-day politics. They believe in winning reforms as both important in themselves and as stepping stones to building a radical movement, but have great difficulty in developing strategy to effect the latter…[they often] develop an analysis of 'objective conditions' that precludes radical action. 'Personally, I think it's a great idea; but the people aren't ready for it now'.[xix]

These were the two central factions, but there were other voices as well. Some people still believed that change was possible through the electoral system and pushed for SDS members to vote for Eugene McCarthy or for a new political party, the People's Freedom Party. And ultimately, when SDS would break up in 1969, there were still other factions, perhaps the most famous of which was the Weathermen, which because of its violent tactics was forced to operate underground. The degree to which any of these groups were morally absolutist is

debatable; what is certain is that each of them contained, at their core, absolutists who powered them forward.

<u>What's to Come</u>

Chapter one will review political theory that lauds and defends the moral compromisers who SDS so aggressively and passionately opposed. It will acknowledge Suzanne Dovi's critique of their theory but I will argue that Dovi does not go far enough in her support of moral absolutists. Chapter two will explain, often through the members' own statements, both why SDS's morally absolute critique was valuable to democracy and why moral absolutism within the movement itself was essential. Chapter three will argue through SDS that confrontation and conflict are essential aspects of democracy that are undervalued by the political theorists cited in chapter one. And chapter four will note that while there are other political theorists who argue for a more conflict-heavy view of democracy, they do not sufficiently extend their appreciation to conflicts between uncompromising sides, or to the morally absolute political actors who can spark them. The abolitionist John Brown will be used to illustrate the fascinating and compelling character of the *individual* moral absolutist that goes unrecognized in these theorists' work. The conclusion summarizes my argument clearly, explains why it is being made, and ties it into a larger debate with practical importance for political decisions being made today.

Chapter One: The Dirty-Hands Debate (and Shugarman)

I begin chapter one by providing a background into dirty-hands theory, based in Michael Walzer's essay that defines a moral politician as an individual who is willing to sacrifice his personal morality for utilitarian ends—but feel guilty about having done so. I note how Walzer and other prominent theorists discount moral absolutists as unrealistic, undesirable, and even undemocratic political actors; even Max Weber, who envisions a role for moral absolutism within the individual, argues that it must be secondary to an ethic of responsibility more in line with political duties.

Then I move into Suzanne Dovi's self-described amendment to Walzer's essay, in which she suggests that moral absolutism can have some positive role in the greater democratic political arena. Dovi argues that moral absolutists can benefit democracy both by acting as moral exemplars who through their actions reaffirm our own moral commitment and by pressuring dirty-hands politicians—who she still envisions in the most powerful political roles—to consider absolutist stances when making political decisions. I criticize Dovi for her complimentary vision of moral absolutists and compromisers, and I argue that moral absolutists often have and are inclined to take a directly antagonistic, powerful stand against moral compromisers in order to get compromisers to consider their stances; I contest her assumption that moral compromisers will do so voluntarily. In addition, I believe that Dovi undersells the value of moral absolutists by limiting their political power that might be potentially positive and not paying attention to their critiques or stances as much as the influence they have on others or the political system writ-large.

I end the chapter with David Shugarman's critique of dirty-hands theory, in part because it identifies some of the potential dangers of advocating for politicians who compromise on their

morals and, as Walzer advocates and as I explain, on some fundamental democratic principles.

More important, however, is the connection Shugarman makes between dirty-hands theory and

its implications for the type of democracy that we want. Following Shugarman's lead, in chapter

three I consider how theory on morality in politics should relate to the type of democracy I think

is most likely to lead to the realization of democratic principles, and I conclude that my own

theory on morality in politics would make more room for conflict and disagreement than dirty-

hands theory allows.

Michael Walzer and the Argument For Moral Compromise, Against Moral Absolutism

In "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands," Michael Walzer considers "a moral

dilemma, a situation where [an individual] must choose between two courses of action both of

which it would be wrong for him to undertake."[xx] Specifically, he is concerned with a

government official who is "forced to choose between upholding an important moral principle

and avoiding some looming disaster."[xxi] In this scenario, he imagines that the 'right' course of

action in utilitarian terms may "leave the man who does it guilty of a moral wrong."[xxii] Walzer

dismisses the man who refuses to take the utilitarian action—the moral absolutist who does not

observe a dilemma because he refuses to contemplate sacrificing his personal morals—as neither

a realistic, moral nor desired politician. He is not realistic because the political office demands

that a politician get his hands dirty; moral, because he fails his utilitarian duty to, as a politician,

achieve the greatest good for the nation's people; or desired, because, according to Walzer, the

people who elected him want and expect him to get his hands dirty on their behalf.

According to Walzer, the absolutist politician "not only fails to do the right thing (in

utilitarian terms), he may also fail to measure up to the duties of his office (which imposes on

him a considerable responsibility for consequences and out-comes)."[xxiii] He says, matter-of-factly, "We would not want to be governed by men who consistently adopted that [absolutist] position."[xxiv] So, with absolutists no longer under consideration, Walzer sets out to determine the correct course of action for a politician faced with this moral dilemma. His goal in developing a theory, Walzer writes, "derives from an effort to refuse 'absolutism' without denying the reality of the moral dilemma."[xxv] He denies moral absolutists but is not satisfied with the utilitarian argument that also concludes there is no moral dilemma—those utilitarians who so confidently assert that there are "calculations we might go through which would necessarily yield the conclusion that one or the other course of action was the right one to undertake in the circumstances (or that it did not matter which we undertook)."[xxvi] To Walzer, the situation is more complicated than either moral absolutists or calculating utilitarians are willing to admit. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that he takes aspects of each approach while denying either is plausible or sufficient on its own, arguing that it is a morally compromising politician—someone with a 'soft' perspective on politics—who is best equipped to handle the dilemma. Morality is still important to this person, but he is ultimately willing to offend his personal morals for a higher, utilitarian moral end.

Walzer argues that moral compromisers, importantly racked by guilt despite performing the politically 'right' action, are the only desirable politicians in a high-functioning democracy.[xxvii] He identifies a moral politician by his willingness to sacrifice his personal morality—and feel guilty about having done so—for a higher moral end. He writes, "Here is a moral politician: it is by his dirty hands that we know him. If he were a moral man and nothing else, his hands would not be dirty; if he were a politician and nothing else, he would pretend that they were clean."[xxviii] Here is the alternative to a moral absolutist, who refuses to compromise his

morals for utilitarian reasons; and calculating utilitarian, who does not feel that his utilitarian decision—proven absolutely to be the right one by his calculations—has marked him in any way as a guilty man.

Walzer gives an example in which a moral individual running for political office is faced with a tough decision: make an illegal deal with a corrupt ward boss and win the election, or stay true to his democratic morals and lose. The individual, Walzer says, should make the deal because "we want *him* to make it, precisely because he has scruples about it."[xxix] Earlier, of course, Walzer claims that moral sacrifice is not only a necessary aspect of the political office— it is necessary to gain political appointment in the first place. He writes pointedly, "No one succeeds in politics without getting his hands dirty."[xxx] So perhaps we should not be surprised by Walzer's acceptance of campaign fraud as not only an activity in which a politician might engage, but one in which he *should* engage. Walzer provides a second example, too, and although it largely cites the same reasons for the politician to compromise his own morals—the political office calls for it, utilitarianism demands it, and his supporters want him to do it—it illustrates Walzer's willingness to apply his theory even to those cases when choosing a higher moral end means breaking one's more fundamental moral principles. Walzer concludes that a politician elected partly on an anti-torture platform and who "believes that torture is wrong, indeed abominable, not just sometimes, but always,"[xxxi] should nonetheless "authorize the torture of a captured rebel leader who knows or probably knows the location of a number of bombs hidden in apartment buildings around the city, set to go off within the next twenty-four hours."[xxxii]

So Walzer is firmly in the 'soft' camp, and he proposes a familiar dichotomy in its favor: Moral compromisers, because of their willingness to compromise, are therefore both politically

reasonable and democratic, as a representative democracy rests on consensus and the notion that political actors will follow the wishes and demands of their constituencies (made up of people who, according to Walzer, want morally compromising politicians as their representatives). In Suzanne Dovi's critique of Walzer's work, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," she writes, "Walzer sees the willingness to compromise one's moral principles in the service of achieving consensus as essential to the proper participation of public officials in democratic political processes."[xxxiii] This leads Walzer, Dovi adds, to conclude, "The proper functioning of democratic institutions is tied to having political actors who are moral compromisers."[xxxiv]

It follows that moral absolutists, on the other hand, because of their unwillingness to compromise, are not only unreasonable but also undemocratic. Dovi notes Walzer's "suspicion that absolutists are less committed to democratic values than are those who are willing to compromise their moral principles for morally important political ends."[xxxv] Further, "Walzer portrays those who refuse to be opportunistic and sacrifice their moral principles to negotiate with others in democracies – specifically the far left and the far right – as 'contemptuous of the people or, at least, of selected portions of the people.'"[xxxvi] To be morally uncompromising is to dismiss the values of certain segments of the population; Walzer asserts that the refusal to compromise on one's own morals suggests intolerance for opposing views—and that this is detrimental to a democracy.

According to Dovi, Walzer sees a "commitment to exile one's opponents as the only alternative to striking compromises with them,"[xxxvii] and that "those who refuse to compromise endanger freedom because they undermine the conditions that make individual choice possible."[xxxviii] In the end, "for Walzer, compromise is the political disposition necessary for toleration and pluralism."[xxxix] He does not appear to recognize any potentially positive role to be

played by moral absolutists, only acknowledging them so far as to label them a threat or at the very least an obstacle to democratic principles and institutions. Dovi observes that Walzer seems to believe that "it is best to have only guilt-ridden, dirty-handed politicians in the political arena."[xl]

In "Politics as a Vocation," Max Weber also considers moral compromisers and absolutists—and takes a similar stance as Walzer, ultimately concluding that the compromiser is the only one fit for political rule, though he must still value his moral convictions. Weber says of individuals who subscribe to the ethic of conviction—the moral absolutists: "If evil consequences flow from an action done out of pure conviction, this type of person holds the world, not the doer, responsible, or the stupidity of others, or the will of God who made them thus."[xli] While the absolutist refuses to wait for society to affirm his convictions, the individual motivated by the ethic of responsibility (often political in nature, as a politician's responsibility to his state and its citizens)—the moral compromiser—is willing to make moral concessions. Weber writes: "A man who subscribes to the ethic of responsibility, by contrast, will make allowances for precisely these everyday shortcomings in people."[xlii] The moral compromiser thinks rationally of the consequences of his actions, and may concede his personal morality if he believes acting in full accordance with it will bring about a negative end for the greater population for which he is responsible.

Weber suggests that both ethical approaches should be present in a politician, but he gives the ethic of responsibility precedence over the ethic of conviction. He writes of the two together: "They are complimentary to one another, and only in combination do they produce the true human being who is *capable* of having a 'vocation for politics.'"[xliii] And yet Weber equates the ethic of responsibility with the politician, and the ethic of conviction with the Gospel; it is

clear that Weber considers the former ethical system more central to a politician than the latter. He writes that a moral absolutist's actions, "judged from the point of view of their possible success, are utterly irrational, and…can and are only intended to have exemplary value."[xliv] A politician *must* make moral compromises, but he must also retain the strength that comes with an ethic of conviction. "Only someone who is certain that he will not be broken when the world, seen from his point of view, is too stupid or base for what he wants to offer it, and who is certain that he will be able to say 'Nevertheless' in spite of everything—only someone like this has a 'vocation' for politics."[xlv] The ethic of conviction, then, or the impulse to stick to one's moral values in all situations, provides a necessary power of will, but it is irrational and should cede its place to a rational, morally compromising side.

Moral absolutists can through their irrational actions at best inspire us and "express a kind of dignity."[xlvi] The moral absolutist may follow the noble maxim "'resist not evil with force,'"[xlvii] but the politician cannot do the same. Unlike a moral absolutist, a politician must answer to his political office, which requires moral compromise. The politician follows a contrary maxim, one motivated by the ethic of responsibility: "'You *shall* resist evil with force, for if you do not, you are *responsible* for the spread of evil.'"[xlviii] It may be nice to privately stick to one's morals, but serving the public demands a higher level of responsibility—and a willingness to compromise those morals.

In "Dirty Hands," Martin Hollis more explicitly and fully explains the prevalent reasons for dismissing the potential political role of moral absolutists. First he dismisses the absolutist as shortsighted and ignorant. He says that it is only "the simple one [who] equates the integrity of the individual with unswerving obedience to conscience or to curt moral imperatives in all situations."[xlix] Moral absolutists underestimate the complexity of issues and are overmatched in

politics. Hollis takes up the aforementioned argument that the political office simply demands

moral compromise and is incompatible with moral absolutism. He writes that an individual

absolutely committed to his morals is necessarily a martyr, and he continues: "The martyr

concedes nothing to the differing moral opinions of his neighbors, whereas the statesman

represents both the martyr and his neighbors…Hence the martyr yields nothing for the sake of

constructing the moral consensus without which the statesman cannot work."[l] A politician must

represent the interests of his entire constituency; similar to Walzer, Hollis argues that a moral

absolutist, because he concedes nothing to—or, as Walzer suggests, is even contemptuous of—

opposing values, is not qualified to hold political office.

Democratic politics demands consensus, which in turn demands a willingness to

compromise, and therefore moral absolutists have no place in politics. Unlike Walzer, however,

Hollis does see moral absolutists having some small potentially positive impact, if only an

indirect one that does not require them to serve in a political office, on democratic citizens. He

writes that absolutists can inspire our admiration of their moral commitment because they go "to

the stake" for their beliefs.[li] Moral absolutists' dedication to their beliefs, the argument goes, may

make 'normal' people stop for a moment to consider how highly they value their own morals—

in the extreme case, an absolutist may even cause an individual to reevaluate what those values

are, or should be. Max Weber makes a similar argument about moral absolutists in "Politics as a

Vocation" when he says that the irrational actions of moral absolutists can at best inspire us and

"express a kind of dignity."[lii] The moral absolutist is someone who we respect for his

unwavering moral commitment but scorn for that very same commitment, which we also view as

irrational, impractical, and undemocratically intolerant.

Hollis also advances Walzer's argument that a moral absolutist—his moral rigidity in

violation of democratic norms—with political power poses a danger because he may rule tyrannically. According to Hollis, a moral absolutist—or martyr "let loose with political power, he sends others to the stake with an equal will and, in shutting his eyes to the moral nuances of political life without thereby abolishing them, he licenses very foul play, provided that it is conducted outside the limits of his simple moral lexicon."[liii] An unwillingness to adapt one's moral guidelines suggests an individual is not only too simple-minded for politics; he is also dangerously undemocratic. He is not useful as a politician whose office requires a flexible commitment to morality, or in a greater political arena that should aim at fostering the democratic ideals of consensus and tolerance.

<u>Dovi's Amendment</u>

In "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," Suzanne Dovi offers a soft challenge to Walzer's dirty-hands theory and its quick dismissal of moral absolutists. Despite adopting an assuaging tone at times—she says she hopes her account "complements Walzer's discussion"[liv] and characterizes her argument as "a friendly amendment to his basic position…that we should favor dirt-handed and guilt-ridden politicians over absolutist ones—"[lv] Dovi asks questions rooted in the same curiosity about moral absolutists that drives this thesis. In asking the questions she does and putting forth even a soft challenge, Dovi carries the dirty-hands discussion forward.

Dovi, like me, wants to know why Walzer so quickly eliminates moral absolutists from his discussion, and she argues that absolutists actually play an integral role in maintaining a morally healthy democratic polity. It is because of her work that I ask *how* does—and not simply *does*—moral absolutism benefit democracy; it is her argument, which proposes that moral absolutists *do* benefit democracy, upon which I hope to expand and build. But I ultimately level the same charge against her that she levels against Walzer: largely, that her argument is "incomplete

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because…[she] fails to recognize adequately the indispensable role played in a morally healthy polity by political actors who refuse to compromise their moral integrity, even for some morally desirable end."[lvi] Before criticizing and hopefully building upon her critique, however, it is necessary to explain her challenge to Walzer, one in which I found a lot of truth—and that in a large part inspired me to write this thesis.

Early in "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," Dovi questions Walzer's decision to only focus on the individual political actor. She proposes that a single action taken by an individual politician can influence the moral standing of the larger political arena—and that we need a moral political arena if we want moral—or Walzerian—politicians. She writes of Walzer's essay: "This individualistic approach to the problem of dirty hands ignores the cumulative effects that individual dirty-handed decisions can have on the polity as a whole."[lvii] Dovi believes that Walzer's focus is too narrow, and to ascertain if there is a positive role for moral absolutists she widens it to consider the entire polity. She finds that there is, in fact, such a positive role: When the moral standing of the greater polity is considered, Dovi contends that moral absolutists are a necessity; she writes that "a morally healthy polity requires absolutists as well as Walzerian moral compromisers."[lviii] If anything, she believes the polity needs more, not fewer, absolutists: "In contrast to Walzer's recommendation to judge moral politicians by their willingness to compromise for morally expedient ends, I would argue that the existing political climate supports such compromises too easily."[lix]

Dovi challenges Walzer to consider some of the benefits of moral absolutists. She writes, "But it seems to me that, not infrequently, one should refuse to compromise one's moral commitments for the sake of achieving desirable political ends."[lx] Without moral absolutists, Dovi argues, the polity risks "moral corruption"[lxi] and a limited "range of moral choices."[lxii]

With regard to the former issue, Dovi says she worries that "moral compromise can weaken a polity's commitment to ethical values."[lxiii] According to Dovi, a polity that only includes moral compromisers would run the risk of routinizing immoral action and might begin to feature citizens and politicians who either had no sense of morality or did not consider acting morally a high priority. She writes, "Dirty-handed decisions – even ones for morally important political gains – can dull the intensity of certain [moral] commitments."[lxiv]

Moral absolutists lead by example, and their unwavering commitment to their own moral values maintains and can increase the presence and value of morality for others—including our political representatives. Dovi writes, "Sometimes, we come to comprehend fully what is morally at stake only when we witness how much people are willing to sacrifice for their morals."[lxv] Perhaps most significantly, politicians continue to think hard about compromising their morals for a perceived morally expedient end—and, having compromised their morals, they truly feel guilty. As Dovi points out, it is essential to his theory that Walzer's moral politicians have high moral standards—and feel guilty about breaking them.

A polity only consisting of moral compromisers, as Walzer envisions, would, therefore, likely be incompatible with his own theory, as "dirty-hands political actors, though initially guilt-ridden, may not have the moral resources necessary for sustaining the emotional response of guilt crucial to Walzer's method of negotiating the problem of dirty hands."[lxvi] It is moral absolutists that make this negotiation possible: "By acting according to their convictions…absolutists…make vivid what political actors with dirty hands should feel guilty about. In this way, absolutists can set and maintain high moral benchmarks."[lxvii] Walzer writes that dirty-hands politicians should feel guilt, but he does not acknowledge that it is often "absolutists [who] can prevent our capacity to feel guilt from being dulled."[lxviii] Without

absolutists, Dovi argues, there becomes less and less to compromise *on*; politicians do not feel guilty because they forget what they were meant to feel guilty *about*.

Dovi also pushes Walzer on his claim that moral absolutists are undemocratic, suggesting instead that the very values on which moral absolutists refuse to compromise can be democratic ones. In her view, absolutists can reinforce democratic values whose existence might otherwise be threatened. Dovi writes of absolutists on the political left, "Indeed, their unwillingness to compromise core liberal democratic values can help preserve, or even restore, the polity's commitment to these values, a commitment vital to the health of democratic institutions."[lxix] She continues on to say that a willingness to compromise on these core liberal values could ultimately spell the end of the political left altogether, and that this would be a dangerous development:

> Indeed, the willingness to compromise these values in order to reach an unsatisfactory agreement with anti-democratic political opponents [on the political right] – especially given that many of them will be absolutists – far from making the left politically relevant, can make the left politically irrelevant.[lxx]

Dovi argues that we really need these absolutists, not only to strengthen our own moral commitments but also because they can influence policy by expanding the number of moral options available to politicians. An absolutist pacifist on the political left who gets public support behind her campaign against war "can in doing so place pressure on military and political leaders to conduct war in ways that minimize [human] costs."[lxxi] Or absolutists can make politically challenging moral stances more palatable to the public by presenting a more extreme alternative. Dovi writes: "Guilt-ridden political actors with dirty hands look more 'reasonable' and gain political leverage by contrasting their own views to those of the absolutists."[lxxii] She gives as an example Malcolm X, who by "present[ing] the white world with a threatening alternative"[lxxiii] to

Martin Luther King Jr. made the latter figure "seem more acceptable to a wide segment of the American public."[lxxiv] Absolutists, then, can contribute to the democratic polity by pressuring dirty-hands politicians into including for consideration "morally preferable options"[lxxv] and by "expand[ing] the negotiating room"[lxxvi] of those same politicians by providing the public with an unreasonable alternative.

Evaluating Dovi's Critique: Asking that it Go Further

Dovi's critique is insufficient; although she acknowledges that moral absolutism is necessary in a high-functioning democracy, she also aligns herself too much with the compromisers. She thinks too often of a symbiotic, or complimentary, relationship between moral absolutist and Walzer-type politicians, one in which the absolutists—usually on the fringe of politics, and excluded from positions of power—express their opinions and, having reminded the dirty-hands politicians and the general public of morality, exit the stage. Not once does Dovi suggest that a moral absolutist playing a major oppositional role—powerful, and directly threatening a dirty-hands politician's hold on power—might play a *primary* part in improving the greater democratic polity.

Although she doles out greater responsibility to moral absolutists than the aforementioned theorists, her argument concerning moral corruption echoes that of Weber and Hollis: Just as they speak of absolutist martyrs who exist to inspire us, Dovi writes that moral absolutists can improve the health of the democratic polity by serving as "moral exemplars" who remind us of the importance of morality.[lxxvii] So it is that, like with Weber and Hollis's absolutist martyrs, "people's willingness to make sacrifices for their moral ideals can inspire others to rethink and deepen their own moral commitments."[lxxviii]

What is clear in both Weber and Dovi's analysis of moral absolutists is that they fear moral

absolutism in a directly oppositional role to moral compromise; they both stress, to the different extents that they recognize moral absolutism can be of some benefit to the political system, that it can at best contribute by complementing—or offering a soft challenge to—moral compromise. Before establishing that absolutism can play a positive political role, albeit a subservient one to moral compromise, Weber is quick to state that "the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility are not absolute opposites."[lxxix] And even when Dovi acknowledges the potential benefits of political opposition between the two parties, she does not put them on equal footing. It is the absolutist pacifist whose oppositional values *might*, if she garners enough public support behind her cause, pressure the moral compromiser in charge into *considering* a less violent military strategy. Or it is Malcolm X whose opposition is of value only because it allows the moral compromiser to appear more reasonable to the public. Moral compromisers always retain the upper hand, and an absolutist challenge to their hold on legitimacy is never considered as a potentially positive event. Consensus is surely an important aspect of democracy, but what of conflict? What of clashing ideas and values? Are political theorists overemphasizing the value of consensus?

Dovi assigns Malcolm X—who as a powerful and directly antagonistic[lxxx] moral absolutist presents an interesting exception to her usual example—only a secondary role; he is only important because his 'unreasonable' stance expands the dirty-hands politician's negotiating power. Are we to believe that this—along with the absolutist martyr who serves as a moral exemplar—is the only positive contribution to democracy that can be made by a directly antagonistic moral absolutist? Nothing is said about the greater significance of Malcolm X and his movement taken alone; Dovi lends no credence to Malcolm X's arguments and why they

found so much support, nor does she examine the role of the dirty-hands politician and his response to the absolutist movement. Dovi only focuses on Malcolm X's secondary importance.

By recognizing that moral absolutists can benefit democracy Dovi has moved the discussion in the right direction, but the potentially positive role she prescribes absolutists is still too limited in scope. I will argue that moral absolutists playing a bigger and more antagonistic role than the one Dovi identifies can also benefit democracy. Existing dirty-hands literature on morality's role in democratic politics overemphasizes consensus, failing to recognize that confrontation is also essential.

<u>Shugarman on Democracy and Dirty Hands</u>

In his essay "Democratic Dirty Hands?" David Shugarman offers a more fundamental critique of Walzer's dirty-hands theory. Unlike Dovi, who proposes an amendment to dirty hands that includes a limited role for moral absolutists and considers the greater political arena, Shugarman takes issue with Walzer's theory in its entirety. For Shugarman, "crucial aspects in both the theory and practice of dirty hands…are jarringly at odds with those of democracy."[lxxxi] At best, those aspects can be seen as related to a "narrow, elitist form of democracy…marked by autocratic features and dispositions that have much more to do with a military mentality and authoritarian paternalism than with thoroughgoing democracy."[lxxxii] This is not the type of democracy that Shugarman envisions as ideal or believes we should pursue.

For Shugarman, the notion that citizens should support and expect a politician to rig an election—Walzer's first hypothetical—is damaging to democratic politics. If rigging an election is excused, Shugarman argues, then "it will be difficult to expect others not to do so in the future."[lxxxiii] His vision of a participatory democracy demands adherence to democratic principles like free and fair elections. It "calls for elected leaders to exhibit transparency…openness…and

accountability…*on an ongoing basis.*"[lxxxiv] In his democracy, the people are engaged in politics

and decisions are not only under the purview of an all-powerful leader. Instead, "citizens have to

persuade each other of the merits of change, and of the substance and pace of particular preferred

changes."[lxxxv] The political system does not aim to give politicians, elected undemocratically, full

reign over important decisions, nor does it expect citizens to be able to identify a politician's

level of guilt—a step that should not be necessary if democratic procedures are followed.

Shugarman objects not only to the idea that dirty-hands theory is compatible with

democratic principles, but also to the suggestion that "dirty hands and politics are inextricably

linked—"[lxxxvi] that "dirty hands are a staple of politics."[lxxxvii] In Shugarman's view, Walzer's

torture hypothetical is hardly a common situation; he argues that to treat the response to it and

other exceptional situations that demand that individuals go against their morals as a norm is

dangerous because doing so encourages people to abandon alternative, preferable tools for

resolving dilemmas that are typically at one's disposal. He writes, "In this view, recourse to dirty

hands is an extreme exception to democratic politics rather than a staple of it and resort to such

tactics is the result of failure of politics and a turn to war."[lxxxviii] Further, Shugarman does not

consider the decision of an individual to overrule his principles in one of these extreme situations

as a signal that he has strayed from his morality, and Shugarman does not believe that the

individual has anything to feel guilty about. People need not consider themselves moral

absolutists: "It is misleading to depict the world as a place where most people can be expected to

be, and expect others to be, pure deontologists *except* for 'gifted' politicians who are expected to

know that they cannot be."[lxxxix]

Shugarman questions whether Walzer's dirty-hands theory subscribes to or seeks to attain a

desirable form of democratic politics. There are weaknesses to Shugarman's arguments—his

quick dismissal of the moral dilemma Walzer proposes, for example, and his decision not to address if Walzer's theory is more applicable to politics as they actually are, perhaps darker than Shugarman's vision but based in reality—and he does not argue for an increased role for moral absolutists, instead suggesting that no one should be expected to be morally absolute. But Shugarman's essay is of value to this thesis because it raises the question of how political theory relates to our vision for a democracy. Following his lead, I will similarly bring into the discussion what democracy should be, ultimately concluding that a vision that excludes moral absolutists fails to acknowledge the value of conflict and clashes among different, uncompromising segments of a democratic population and between citizens and the government.

Chapter Two: More on SDS, and the Benefits of a Morally Absolute Critique and Moral Absolutists Within an Oppositional Social Movement

Political theorists who dismiss moral absolutists and Dovi, who does not go far enough in her support of them, miss that powerful moral absolutists are essential to democracy because they both remind people of their values and morally compromising politicians of what they are to feel guilty *about*. They remind us of the moral questions present in political decisions and open up the possible range of moral perspectives. Often they need to take a primary, directly oppositional role to government because it is individuals in power and within the political system who are often the most morally corrupted and, because they benefit most from that system in its current form, unwilling to consider difficult moral questions unless they are forced. Moral absolutists can help expose undemocratic or amoral political actions that would otherwise remain well hidden; they can help hold people in power morally accountable. In doing so, they can make sure that the dirty-hands politician weighs even harder the decision to act immorally for the greater good—perhaps not all his constituents want him to do so, and absolutist ones will make him stand by his actions publically, whether he feels guilty about them or not. Walzer assumes there will always be a moral side of a dirty-hands politician that he should override, but Walzer fails to appreciate how that side might disappear without the existence of moral absolutists.

Moral absolutists are also an essential ingredient of any social movement that aims to achieve fundamental changes in society.[xc] Just as they can reinforce the moral commitment of the population at large, within a movement moral absolutists also help create a core commitment

to the group's cause from which less absolutist members can draw. For individuals in opposition to be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to affect change against the wishes of entrenched leaders who usually have superior coercive power, that commitment is vital. So is a certain absolutist understanding of the political situation—that it is 'us' versus 'them', 'good' versus 'evil'; with these strict lines drawn, it becomes easier to sacrifice oneself to a cause which otherwise might not appear to be in one's immediate rational self-interest.

I begin this chapter by showing how SDS was a movement largely founded in opposition to the older generation and its political leaders' tendency toward moral compromise. Their anger and frustration at the policies that resulted from this compromise show some of the potential problems of moral compromise, and how moral compromisers must at times be directly opposed by organizations like SDS that hold an absolutist critique, regardless of how many of their members are really absolutist. I will argue, largely through SDS's own statements and editorials published in its newspaper *NLN*, that insisting on compromise can often really excuse one from having to consider the moral ramifications of one's actions. It can also mean there is less and less to compromise on, to the point where morals no longer become part of the discussion. I will show how SDS sought to hold the politicians accountable for their actions and expose those that were undemocratic and immoral, and I will argue that these efforts were beneficial to society. I will show how SDS brought morality back into politics and helped expose aspects of the political system that needed to be altered.

Then I will move inside the movement itself and detail the debate within the organization. I will show that SDS failed in some respects because it was not absolutist *enough* (in chapter three, I will address how absolutist actions also contributed to SDS' downfall). I will argue that SDS members were unwilling to make the kind of sacrifices that would have been

necessary for the movement to achieve its aspirations, and that if they had been more absolutist in their moral commitment to their cause, they may have been more successful. Being absolutist may be irrational and even scary, but it can also be a sign of courage and strength. Although absolutism can, because of the commitment it entails, lead into desperate and violent measures, this need not always be the case. In chapter three, I will argue that a confrontation and negotiation structure, with moral absolutists leading the way with the former and the compromisers with the latter, which almost took form within SDS, would have been the ideal strategy for the organization to employ to help it achieve its ambitious ends.

SDS Positions Itself In Opposition to Moral Compromise

Walzer makes two assumptions which SDS powerfully called into question: first, that the morally compromising politician faced with a moral dilemma knows which action will bring about the greatest good for the greatest number of people; and second, that when the individual political actor makes this decision, he does so with the blessing of the people on whose behalf he makes it. Any censure comes from the politician himself: he feels guilty for having compromised his morals, but there is no one to hold him accountable for his actions—nor, Walzer asserts, should there be, because we *want* him to make the decision he ultimately made. The politician owes no one an explanation for his action, and he makes it alone. Entering a world they found oddly at ease with decisions and actions they viewed as morally repellent, SDS youth did not feel that they should have to abide silently while these politicians apparently did these things on their behalf. It was not, they cried out, in their or the country's best interests to escalate the war in Vietnam or to continue to deny black Americans their civil rights—and they wanted it to be understood that they did not give their blessing.

They were sick of the Walzer-approved politician who runs on an anti-torture platform and tortures when he's in office, and then—if the information is ever leaked—says he did it in their best interests.[xci] This feeling was especially magnified at a time when both parties supported the Cold War, and the liberal, John F. Kennedy, who had promised change and inspiration and spoke loftily of fundamental American values, led the country into the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban Missile Crisis. They were offended by these leaders' hypocrisy, and they were angered by thoughts of where moral compromise had and would lead.

In the group's 1962 political manifesto the *Port Huron Statement*, SDS spoke on behalf of the "people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit."[xcii] Largely the products of middle-class liberal families, they wrote that they identified their childhood both with the notion that the United States was the "wealthiest and strongest country in the world"[xciii] and a nation that stood for and was guided by just, democratic principles—"freedom and equality for each individual, [and a] government of, by, and for the people."[xciv] And so their confidence was shaken as they saw the safety and moral certainty of which they had been assured growing up clearly and seriously in doubt. Subjected to the Cold War, they learned to live under "the presence of the Bomb, [which] brought awareness that we ourselves, and our friends, and millions of abstract 'others' we knew…might die at any time."[xcv] Witnesses to the civil rights struggle for freedoms and privileges they had been taught were already granted to all citizens, early SDS members saw the basic human respect and dignity they thought the country stood for contradicted in the white racism that had necessitated and now pushed back violently against the civil rights movement. These issues were "too immediate and crushing in their impact," too morally troubling, for SDS members to ignore.[xcvi] What they saw as the "paradoxes…and hypocrisy of American ideals"[xcvii]

imbued them with a sense of "urgency"[xcviii] and a desire to alter the direction of events. Why was the country not living up to its promises—and why was this failure understood by political actors and the older generation to be normal and acceptable? Why should they wait to see the country meet the values they had been taught were already met—were the pillars on which the country was built?

But what was perhaps most troubling to these students who would become the foundation for the New Left movement of the 1960s was the sense that, in the face of these enormously troubling and real concerns, few Americans shared their intense and immediate need to confront and try to fix these problems. Agreement and consensus, rationality, calmness and patience, were valued; discord, anger, and even change were undesirable. Todd Gitlin, who would in 1963 become the president of Harvard SDS, writes, "Republicans and Democrats disputed whether the primary agent of insecurity was internal or external Communism, but virtually the whole society agreed that the Soviet state posed a serious threat to peace and the American way of life."[xcix] He added, "Passionate as was the impetus, the tone of the enterprise remained moderate."[c] SDS lamented in its manifesto of the majority of society, "They fear change itself, since change might smash whatever invisible framework seems to hold back chaos for them now. For most Americans, all crusades are suspect, threatening."[ci]

Parents who had grown up during the Depression and lived through a World War were now experiencing material comforts unparalleled in their lives. Many of them moved to the suburbs, about which popular culture held an idyllic vision. They saw their own and others' economic improvement and concluded that most social problems would be solved in due time. Writes Gitlin of the prevailing liberal view, "If some people were left out of the mainstream, if there were still (in a common phrase) 'pockets of poverty,' these were exceptional; they could

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soon and easily be taken care of. Social problems were, in another well-worn phrase, 'unfinished

business.'"[cii] The ideals and values were there, but the requisite action to bring about their

fruition was not. There was "a glaring discrepancy between promise and

performance…Liberalism stood for equality, but lacked the means, or the will, or the blood-and-

guts desire, to bring it about."[ciii] Further, now that many liberals had achieved the middle-class

status for which they had worked, they found themselves less willing to take risks to affect

changes that could threaten their own, recently acquired status. Gitlin writes, "Organized

liberalism…had made its bargain with affluence; it passed on its ideals to its children, but spoke

in the voice of the proprietor…the unspoken language of property and complacency."[civ]

 In an interview, Gitlin explained to me the development of SDS and youth politics in

straightforward terms.

> You see a great deal wrong with the world, and so you survey the
> territory to find out what to do about it. Naturally, you look at your
> family and ask yourself: How did it happen that they left me this
> world? At a young age, you develop a rebellious attitude. You find
> yourself moralistic, and it's then that you start looking critically…I
> can remember imputing an enormous amount of responsibility to
> my parents.[cv]

For many SDS members, then, their politics were rooted in a sense of opposition to their

parent's generation and what they considered to be its moral failures. Gitlin writes, "We were

going to be active where our parents' generation had been passive, potent where…they had

finally proved impotent."[cvi] They wanted to achieve liberalism's unmet promises—the

"commitment to justice, peace, equality, and personal freedom which their parents professed."[cvii]

They were willing—felt compelled—to take the action they felt was necessary to bring about the

change they wanted in the world. Unlike their parents, they were "not going to take evil lying

down—this practical moralism was a good part of the movement's appeal...They tended to think

that, in succeeding, their parents had failed—some by giving up, some by settling for material rewards."[cviii] Where their parents had compromised or been complacent, SDS members aimed to be resolute and active. What good were morals unless they were put into practice?

Not having grown up during the Depression, SDS members were unsatisfied with material comfort as a refuge against Cold War politics they feared could end their world at any moment and as they watched a minority group fight against deeply entrenched American racism. Not having been politically active during the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, or economically desperate when he introduced New Deal legislation, they did not recognize "the government [as] the natural ally of the common people at home and the natural enemy of totalitarianism abroad."[cix] Free from the fear of economic insecurity and without any property of their own to lose, SDS youth could afford to be more radical than their parents. Inherent in the New Left movement was "a generational identity: New Left, meaning neither Old Left nor liberal,"[cx] but defining itself as what it was not also meant there was an opposition, especially as the Vietnam War continued to escalate, a sense it was a moral 'us' against a morally compromising 'them'—those politicians, liberal or conservative, it did not matter, entrenched in a corrupted political system that had distorted or failed to live up to American values. What Gitlin identifies as "youthful difference…leaped into a self-conscious sense of *opposition*."[cxi]

The New Left increasingly took aim at these politicians and their notion of gradualism and consensus; they argued that these men who preached being 'reasonable' and calm and believed that the democratic system was functioning adequately, were actually committing morally unacceptable atrocities. Gradualism meant putting off necessary changes; consensus meant quieting dissent. Students in SDS and the greater New Left movement grew increasingly frustrated as they saw politicians respond to their moral arguments with disdain and a call for

order or with promises of change that never came. In the March 25, 1968 edition of *NLN*,

member Eric Mann argued, "The whole structure is designed to accommodate without actually

changing anything. A whole aura of 'let's be reasonable' is built in."[cxii] For SDSers like Mann,

the issues and opinions considered reasonable by the establishment didn't include much space

for disagreement or progress.

Opening Up the Range of Moral Perspectives

It may at first appear odd to suggest that moral absolutists, who by their very definition

are not open to debate on certain issues, can open up the possible range of perspectives and help

make for a richer and more morally thoughtful democratic system. But as SDS discovered—and

by no means were all SDS members moral absolutists on all issues, or even absolute in their

commitment to them, but the organization's critique was one that insisted that more absolutism

on certain issues was necessary (more on this later)—a system in which compromise and

consensus is emphasized, if it goes unchallenged, can become one that only considers a small

number of issues open for debate. Democrats and Republicans were largely in agreement on

issues of foreign policy, and SDS members did not feel that the liberal option was nearly liberal

enough. They'd find that while politicians preached compromise and reaching one's hands

across the table, they weren't thinking of reaching a great distance—especially not to

accommodate the wishes of disgruntled, largely middle-class college students.

Perhaps in part because SDS and the New Left movement was primarily a youth

movement, its members felt that their demands were not being taken seriously. Mann identified

"a widespread fear among radical students that their parents' cynical dismissal of student protest

as a last fling before a lifetime of submission may be accurate."[cxiii] Gitlin remembered feeling as

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if "the official reactions had ranged from 'barely concealed condescension to political dismissal.'"[cxiv] He recalled with frustration, "We had apprenticed to insiders, fine-tuned our expertise, made the right friends, tried to influence the right people, spoken their language—now where were the signs that knowledge meant power?"[cxv] They struggled to convince the establishment that their concerns were serious, and that they would not disappear from the political scene without a fight. Even after SDS occupied Columbia University and skirmished with police, University President Grayson Kirk took a gradual approach to reform that did not seem to match the intensity of the situation.

On a "Face the Nation" interview, Kirk acknowledged that students had been asking for a greater say in university regulations for some time, but he asserted that his administration "had moved pretty far in this direction."[cxvi] He continued, "We have been negotiating for some weeks about the appointment of an all-university Director of Student Interests."[cxvii] Asked if the students would have any say in the appointment, Kirk responded that they would not: despite the militant takeover of an elite university, the amount of change acceptable to the administration was relatively minimal. A student protest at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin ended when "the University Administration met with the leaders of the demonstrations—some of which had drawn eight hundred to a thousand people—expressing sympathy for their general aims and concerns, but neglecting to act on demands."[cxviii]

Sometimes a show of sympathy without real change to accompany it worked, but often this approach and others that dismissed or did not fully acknowledge the seriousness of the youth movement had an opposite, radicalizing effect. Mann contributed "the ultra-revolutionary posturing in our movement" to the student anxiety he had identified—that parents were right when they condescended about the seriousness of the movement.[cxix] Gitlin found himself

attracted to SDS in part because he "shared [with other members] the fervent desire to find a community of peers to take seriously and be taken seriously by."[cxx] Considering the militant turn SDS would ultimately take, it may be worth speculating if things could have been different had the adults who SDS challenged taken the organization's concerns more seriously.

But as the liberal elite seemed increasingly unwilling to compromise, so did SDS. They felt that politicians from the Democratic Party did not offer a path toward change, and one of their most significant fears was being co-opted by the old-school liberals. An article in *NLN* titled "Eugene as Lyndon" indicated that the peace candidate wasn't so different from the Democratic president who had escalated the war in Vietnam. It read: "Any politically aware person knows that McCarthy offers no real alternative to Johnson's imperialist policies…Sad to relate, some of the calcified bourbons of the Old Left, who never forget and never learn, are again singing the praises of 'the lesser evil.'"[cxxi] Kit Bakke wrote in September of 1968 that SDS "is also aware of the danger of co-optation by liberal elements…designed to play the same role that McCarthy has admitted in his own—to channel dissent that is politically radical into Democratic Party confines."[cxxii] To SDS, co-optation meant that Old Left politicians would, despite throwing surface support to New Left causes for votes, fail to inject the moralism that SDS felt was missing from politics. One SDS member wrote, "The liberal wing of the corporate power structure (the ruling class) are good at co-opting (or taking over and using for their own non-human ends) the human concern that moves many of our generation."[cxxiii] This was not the change that SDS envisioned.

Carl Oglesby denounced the argument of McCarthy supporters that SDS members should be more politically realistic by lessening their demands and voting for the peace candidate, who could at the very least do less poorly than the other politicians. He argued that a more radical

critique of the political system and its political parties was too valuable to compromise.

Abandoning it would maintain the same consensus-focused amoral politics SDS was fighting

against.

> Granted the sincerity of his occasional New Left-sounding
> flourishes, McCarthy's 'practicality' amounts in the end to the
> adulteration of the necessary critique of the War, the obscuring of
> its sources in the system of American expansionism. It amounts to a
> moderating of already timid proposals which therefore lose
> whatever character they might have had…No question: Such a
> policy is 'practical', 'possible', and 'realistic'. We've had it for
> years.[cxxiv]

If reasonable politics are what led to the Vietnam War, they charged, maybe it was time

to be unreasonable. A December 1967 editorial in the University of California-Berkeley's

student newspaper *Ramparts* illustrates the growing anger among New Leftists at the politicians

in Washington and their prevailing preference for compromise. Titled, "Hell No, We Won't Go!"

it defended the actions of anti-war demonstrators in Washington, whose tactics had been

criticized as too extreme both by the politicians whose policies they challenged and by much of

the general public.

The editors wrote, "It is the thesis of this essay that the reasonable man has become the

enemy of this society at this time. His reason has been soured by compromise and his moral

conscience traded for a conscience of conciliation. The capacity to ask fundamental questions

appears to have been lost."[cxxv] The argument of the editorial largely parallels my own in the next

chapter: "This lack of fundamental opposition to men—or ideas—in power has been the greatest

danger stemming from the liberal consensus. Political decisions have been made without the

benefit of strong and clashing political ideas—from the left, or from the right—and the inevitable

result has been the stagnation and corruption of the center."[cxxvi] Conflict and discord, necessary

elements of democracy, were being silenced, and democracy was worse off because of it.

Demonstrators and the New Left largely blamed an insistence on acting reasonable for the morally troubling situation in which they now found themselves. They attacked the values of consensus and compromise as excuses for ignoring the moral implications of political actions, and they suggested that some issues warranted a black-and-white, absolutist understanding:

> In a society which so values comfort and where conciliation (some would use the word co-option) is generally and usually successfully employed to smooth over any troublesome rifts in the consensus, there is little room for the indiscriminate exercise of moral indignation. In this sense, it is easy to understand how the uncompromising goals and populist tactics of the dissenters in the streets could be so repulsive to the comfortable, conciliatory, and reasonable men whose material stake in life, along with their honest social and political beliefs, are all tied, in their entirety, to comfort, conciliation and reasonableness. But understanding is not excusing.[cxxvii]

It was unreasonable men that the country needed; SDS felt that at a time when morality was not an integral part of the politicians' decision-making process, individuals who were perhaps irrationally motivated by morals were needed to bring the discussion back to morality. The editors thanked these individuals:

> Fortunately, there are also unreasonable men in America…convinced that as of now, the democratic process is incapable of responding to the intensity of today's moral crisis which has crystallized over Vietnam, and that the system must be confronted, changed, *opened* again before it is too late. Conscience, they insist— in a cry as American as the dream of reasonableness itself—is more human, more important, than can be any devotion to procedure."[cxxviii]

 The editors wrote, "Charging the Pentagon is not nice, and neither is burning draft cards…But to hundreds of thousands of citizens the war in Vietnam is so incredibly monstrous, its goals so undefined, its methods so horrible, its escalation so relentless, that the moral imperative to oppose it has overbalanced the need for respectability; it demands a break in life style."[cxxix] It was time to stop being nice: morality demanded it. The issue was black-and-white, and there could be no compromise. SDS and the New Left were growing impatient, and many members decided that if the government wouldn't listen to their demands, they would have to

force it to listen. The editors continued, "Every American must realize that resistance and militant protest is going to continue; it will grow as the war grows, and it will not go away until the war ends. That is the nature of a moral imperative."[cxxx] The goal? That "the increased militancy of the protestors does in fact represent a threat to the stability of society."[cxxxi]

Demonstrators stated their willingness to fight for a cause that they felt morally compelled them to act. These disagreements were fundamental and conflict unavoidable; they were about issues for which compromise was not possible. The editors wrote, "The consensus by which this country operates is simply not programmed to deal with moral crises."[cxxxii] After all, its not as if the sides were close to agreement but hit a snag in negotiation; the editors argued the "division is reducible to rather elemental terms."[cxxxiii] The establishment believed that "any attempt at effecting change which departs from the channels and assumptions of that system is not only disorderly but dangerous."[cxxxiv] The editors countered, "The democratic process…is not providing real political alternatives to the voters or allowing legitimate channels for the discussion of such alternatives. If you doubt that, ask somebody who voted for Johnson against Goldwater."[cxxxv] Both sides supported the escalation of the Vietnam War. To anti-war demonstrators who fervently believed that actions in Vietnam were morally unacceptable, then, it was necessary to take on the system as a whole, and to do so in an unreasonable way. If the stability the compromisers valued so much was threatened, then would they listen?

Two Uncompromising Sides: the Response of the Morally Compromising Politician to Militant Protest, and a Reason to Question Dovi's Theory

For SDS, it became clear to most members that the system was not willing to adopt the types of changes or the attitude of urgency for which they felt the situation called. When Dovi

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writes that moral absolutists benefit democracy by expanding the range of moral options available to the dirty-hands politician, she fails to recognize that politicians in power may be unwilling to listen or even respond to absolutist challenges unless they feel that those absolutists directly threaten their claim to legitimacy or hold on power. Dovi assumes that dirty-hands politicians are willing to listen, or can be convinced to sit at the table with a relatively small showing of support for the absolutist cause. And yet SDS, which in 1968 was at the height of its power, with membership totaling roughly a hundred thousand and supporters numbering in the millions,[cxxxvi] had not yet received such an understanding reception. More militant demonstrations would, in fact, get the government's attention, but that did not mean that compromisers would now be willing to listen.

From a series of confrontations that turned violent in 1968, SDS would find that, if directly challenged, the system would respond—but not with careful consideration and rational discourse. Confrontations between SDS and the government in 1968—the final full year that SDS was in operation and also the year during which it was most powerful and influential— showed that the other side was not going to take militant and unreasonable demonstration tactics lightly. If many SDS members appeared morally absolute in their conviction that they were in the right and the government and its police forces in the wrong, it appeared that the other side had come to a similar conclusion. Officials in power did not take well to these challenges; just as SDS revved up its membership for full-scale confrontation, so did the other side.

Over the course of the year, SDS discovered that the militant, unreasonable tactics that the *Ramparts* editors encouraged would not be met with discussion: even reasonable men, it seemed, had their limits. Gone was the government's insistence on compromise—if protestors were going to act unreasonably, so would they. And yet it was often difficult to identify which

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side was provoking which, as each typically claimed that the other had escalated the conflict. Confrontations between SDS and the police were violent affairs, and the recounts of protests in *NLN* often read like battle scenes.

In February, editors recapped events in Orangeburg, South Carolina that left three student protestors dead and 50 injured using this language. They wrote: "City and state police surrounded the schools and invaded the campuses…the Guardsmen led an assault onto the campus, shooting wildly at the students, who were unarmed. The police had shotguns, rifles, and M-16s."[cxxxvii] The editors felt the lesson from the event was clear: "We must fight—much, much harder than ever before—on every front."[cxxxviii] A student from one of the universities commented in a follow-up article: "'It was cold-blooded murder…Murder. We'll never let them get away with something like this again.'"[cxxxix] Describing police violence against blacks, the SDS National Council went so far as to compare police actions to genocide. They wrote in a resolution, "There is no other way to interpret the mobilization and militarization of local police, state police, and National Guardsmen in and around the black ghettos of the whole country."[cxl]

While these SDS accounts in *NLN* were likely biased in favor of the protesters, it seems clear that the government and its police forces often matched SDS's uncompromising nature, and may have contributed to the movement's move toward militancy, radicalism, and in some cases, violence. After a bloody confrontation between police and protestors in Oakland, Mayor Alioto called the demonstrators "'neo-fascist student-types'…[and said] 'if charges of police brutality are brought up by any of those arrested…they would not have enough evidence to support such allegations.'"[cxli] At a George Wallace rally in Omaha, Nebraska in March of 1968, SDS claimed that demonstrators were the ones with peaceful intentions. SDS member Tim Andrews wrote that the marchers "wanted to show the people of Omaha that they were not at all for this appearance

of a white bigot in Omaha, but that the furthest thing from their minds was any use of violence to prevent him from speaking."[cxlii] He added, "The average black person did not like Wallace, but it was also very clear that the demonstrators had no intention of physically disrupting his speech."[cxliii] While Andrews admitted that protestors heckled Wallace, he claimed that the Republican presidential candidate could still be heard over their complaints. He cried foul over the police officers' intentions, adding, "Heckling does not by any stretch of the imagination justify premeditated police violence and aggression."[cxliv]

In his mind and the minds of other SDS members who clashed with police officers in 1968, it was the government's actors who were acting unreasonable and absolutist—and, SDS asserted, undemocratic. According to Andrews, Wallace taunted the demonstrators, calling them "'un-American.'"[cxlv] Andrews argued that by refusing to act police officers showed racist a double standard, claiming, "(If [militant black civil rights activist] Rap Brown did this, they would arrest him for inciting a riot.)"[cxlvi] According to Andrews, police then attacked the non-violent protestors with MACE and beat them as they tried to flee the auditorium. Andrews charged the media with falsely presenting the violence as having been provoked by the black demonstrators. In a common argument that often ended articles such as this one, Andrews then suggested that it was the violence of the compromising politician and his police force that had radicalized the opposition, and not the other way around. Andrews wrote, "Before [the black protestors] had hoped that by peaceful demonstration something could be accomplished; now they knew this would be impossible. The only course left to them was a full-scale riot."[cxlvii] It was the dirty-hands politician who had held the absolutist line: "Obviously this is what Mr. Wallace wants—to stir up enough hatred so that peaceful negotiations are impossible, and violence is the one thing the Negro has left. Then he will get the white backlash vote."[cxlviii]

Gitlin's description of Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's preparations for the 1968 Democratic Convention, at which SDS had promised large non-violent protests, also suggests that the self-identified reasonable, compromising politician could be equally absolutist—with a superior coercive force at his disposal—in his conception of which side was right and which wrong. It appeared that Daley and the Chicago police were unwilling to allow SDS the opportunity to protest peacefully. According to Gitlin, SDS members Tom Hayden and Rennie Davis "tried to reassure the media that they wouldn't try to stop the convention from taking place, but the police and federal agents who were monitoring their moves inflated their ambiguous hints of violent confrontation into an unambiguous threat to the convention."[cxlix] Making the New Left movement appear violent and threatening took potential public support away from the movement and justified police violence against the agitators. Gitlin writes, "Stalling on permits, Daley proceeded with fortifications."[cl] During this time, Hayden and Davis "were being tailed, around the clock, by plainclothesmen conspicuously displaying their guns and growling threats."[cli] The SDS newspaper *NLN* claimed, "Mayor Daley has now made it clear that even the most peaceful protest is no longer possible in this city."[clii]

Largely because Daley and the Chicago police force made it clear that the confrontation was going to be a violent one, many SDS members committed to non-violence stayed away from the confrontation. Gitlin wrote that in the months leading up to the Convention, "Rank-and-file devotees to nonviolence were defecting in droves."[cliii] Still, Gitlin wrote that even among those who showed, "The great majority of the demonstrators simply wanted to march and chant, to stand up and proverbially be counted; when the cops charged, gassed, smashed, they ran."[cliv] What resulted was a display of police brutality against demonstrators few had anticipated in such severity. Gitlin writes that the Walker Report to the National Commission on the Causes and

Prevention of Violence concluded it was a "police riot."[clv] Says Gitlin: "In brief, again and again, the police came down like avenging thugs. They charged, clubbed, gassed, and mauled—demonstrators, bystanders, and reporters."[clvi] Dirty-hands politicians in power showed that they could not be forced to listen, and they pushed to silence. It took two sides to fight an us versus them battle, and SDS was not solely responsible for such a mentality. In this way, moral absolutists—or those who directly challenge moral compromisers in power—can reveal the limitations of dirty-hands politicians' willingness to debate and show that, when pushed to the edge, it may not be the moral absolutists who appear unreasonable or even undemocratic.

Exposing Undemocratic, Unreasonable Tactics of Democratic, Reasonable Men

Walzer believes that moral absolutists, because of their certainty regarding specific moral issues, are therefore less democratic than moral compromisers, but he fails to recognize that if a culture of compromise is encouraged, maintained and unchallenged and morality shrinks from the discourse, dirty-hands politicians may reveal themselves—once they are challenged—as just as unwilling to negotiate—or share their power. Moral absolutists can still fight for democratic principles, as the SDS protestors showed. To be morally absolutist, after all, does not mean that one is morally absolute in every cause—nor does it preclude one from being morally uncompromising on democratic values. In doing so and directly confronting the compromisers in power, they can reveal how compromisers can often lose sight of democratic ideals. After all, one of the central reasons SDS was formed was in response to what students felt were the unmet democratic values and ideals which the older generation had preached but been too willing to compromise.

SDS members frequently and vigorously asserted their support of democratic principles and called out the government for what they charged as its failure to live by them. Eric Mann wrote, "Our ideal is a democratically-run society in which the university is one of many useful and liberating institutions—not a haven for an elite."[clvii] Oglesby commented, "If America began in earnest to practice the democratic act, those who now govern might not be government much longer."[clviii] A SDS resolution passed in October of 1968 lamented, "Elections are a fraud because they foster the illusion that people have democratic power over the major institutions of society. In fact, jails, courts, schools, factories, the army, and the election process itself are controlled by a ruling class."[clix] Tom Hayden set out to "shatter that façade of so-called democracy at the [Democratic National] Convention."[clx] Following police violence against demonstrators at the Convention, on SDS member wrote, "The 'democratic process' is dead…We, the youth of America, in the tens of thousands, come here in our justified anger and are met at gunpoint."[clxi]

Although as the movement became more radical many of its members expanded their critique to include not only the politicians in office but the system itself and its capitalist values, most SDS members still held on to their democratic ideals and insisted that the decisions made within the organization be made by a democratic process of deliberation. In a response to a proposed alteration to the SDS preamble that would drop the passage's democratic vision, Chris Hobson of the University of Chicago SDS showed how even the more radical SDS members did not dismiss their democratic principles. He wrote, "Although stating an explicitly revolutionary perspective is a step forward for SDS, dropping the statement of democracy as the goal of struggle would constitute two steps back."[clxii] He advocated "a statement of workers' democracy as the goal of socialist struggle…[but not] the deletion of democracy as a goal."[clxiii] This

tendency among even the most radical individuals to maintain their democratic commitment was also illustrated in a call for support from SDS member Rich Rothstein. He wrote, "And if radicals are those who believe passionately in the democratic and revolutionary potential of the common man, it is here that they must search out him and his potential."[clxiv] It was revolution, or at least revolutionary rhetoric, in the name of democracy.

SDS members continued to criticize political actors for failing to live by the democratic ideals they preached. One wrote, "This is not the America we read about in school, where we were taught about the democratic process and the American way."[clxv] One SDSer feared that President Johnson's militant response to an incident in North Korea might result in "the erosion and destruction of any remaining vestiges of democratic control by the American people."[clxvi] It was not democracy that was at fault for the problems of the country, but rather an elite group of individuals who had distorted its message. Wrote one SDS member, "Consequently, this analysis assumes that for democratic control in the university to be meaningful the general society must be substantially changed."[clxvii] Often, they charged the government with infringing on their democratic rights; a note from leading civil rights activists published in *NLN* read that "the Government has begun a serious and systematic attempt at repression of the anti-war, black liberation, and student movements. Inherent in these attacks is a threat to the democratic rights of every American citizen."[clxviii]

SDS often charged leading politicians like Daley and Wallace with preventing peaceful, democratic protest. Responding to an incident at Texas South University that led to the arrest of five black militants, a release from Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee printed in *NLN* warned: "The freedom of all of us is involved in the TSU case. It signifies an obvious attempt by the power structure to stifle and crush social protest…If we stand together, we may be able to

stop them. Otherwise there is little hope for democracy and justice in this country."[clxix] Dirty-hands politicians might use democratic rhetoric, but SDS argued that in reality they were not committed to its principles and rules.

A Willingness to Sacrifice As an Essential Ingredient in a Social Movement

If SDS radicals did not succeed in their goals, part of the problem may have been that they were not absolutist—or radical—enough. If an individual believes absolutely that he is right and has a firm commitment to his cause, then he is more likely to make sacrifices, perhaps irrational ones, in order to see that cause achieved. A revolutionary struggle requires sacrifice, and as David Barber posits in *A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and Why It Failed*, SDS members may have been too reluctant to renounce their privileges—or to back up their critique of society's supposed moral corruption. Barber takes one side of a debate that raged within SDS in 1968 and early 1969 when he argues "that white students failed to see themselves as authentic agents of change because of their whiteness, their white privilege."[clxx]

According to Barber, SDS and the New Left failed, and it failed because its members were not willing to address or give up their male, white, and mostly middle-class elite status. He writes, "The New Left failed because it ultimately came to reflect the dominant white culture's understandings of race, gender, class, and nation."[clxxi] Barber argues that SDS was a male-dominated organization that gave little credence or voice to women's concerns. He asserts that SDS failed to "transcend the gendered norms of the society it was supposedly in revolt against."[clxxii] He writes of the unequal power dynamic: "While men were arguing and making grand theory and policy, women did what at the time was called 'shit work'—[women] made the coffee, typed the letters, ran the officer, cooked the food, and kept the men satisfied."[clxxiii]

Women, if they achieved any status within the organization, "attained it through their connection to men."[clxxiv] According to Barber, when approached about oppressive gender norms within the organization, male SDS members would preach patience. At this time gender just wasn't one of "the movement's main priorities."[clxxv]

According to Barber, SDS members didn't back up their critical analysis of society with regard to race, either. They might articulate a stance of racial equality, but when it came down to it, their actions and views were more in line with those of the greater society to which they claimed to be opposed. They weren't willing to give up enough to ensure that their vision would be realized. Barber writes, "More often than not, SDSers took the black movement's style over its substance and interpreted the movement's main demands on white activists in ways that left white racial identity intact, if somewhat discomforted."[clxxvi] SDS members failed to look within and to white communities to interrogate their own racial identity and what it meant. Barber argues "that New Leftists long understood racism as only affecting black people and disconnected racism from their own experience."[clxxvii] White people were the norm, and it was black people who in their vision would be integrated—integration was the goal, not changing the white people with whom blacks were to be assimilated. Barber writes, "They were not the racialized ones; they were part of the American mainstream; they were normal."[clxxviii] As a result, Barber claims, "The majority of New Leftists failed to appreciate Black Power's imperative for antiracist organizing in the white community."[clxxix] Viewing racism as only a black problem, they did not recognize the significance of the Black Power movement or accede to black leaders' demands to organize within their own communities.

Barber says that inherent in this refusal to take the Black Power movement as seriously as they should have was a sense among SDS members, rooted in their white privilege, that they

would be the movers and leaders of a social movement whose aims were greater than those of any one of its segments, of which they viewed the Black Power movement as one. He comments, "Still, a more important obstacle stood in the way of SDS's ability to appreciate Black Power's significance to white activists: SDS members' long-held belief that SDS stood as the center of social change in the United States."[clxxx] Barber criticizes SDS for what he sees as its "division of labor in the struggle for social change. Black people and the civil rights movement would be responsible for the struggle against racism—apparently a black problem—and would be a single element in the SDS's radical coalition. SDS would be responsible for everything else."[clxxxi] Like gender, race was secondary to the "'more important' class struggle."[clxxxii] SDS members might be inspired by black militancy, but they would appropriate it for their own, white concerns. Barber writes that the SDS movement's "imitation of black assertiveness acknowledged the strength of the black movement, but in a fashion designed not to enhance that strength but to use that power to address its own immediate, white, concerns."[clxxxiii] He asserts that SDS minimized the significance of Black Power and its leaders because SDS members failed to address and sacrifice the racial privilege that they had inherited from the system they claimed they wanted to bring down.

Barber argues that SDS's failure to address its own privilege and make the sacrifices necessary for radical change was also apparent in the group's attitudes toward issues of social class and foreign policy. Barber argues that SDS followed the Old Left claim that class trumped race, and that the black man's "real enemy was the greedy exploiter, or the labor aristocrat, and not the average white worker."[clxxxiv] Again Barber argues that this signals that SDS was not radical enough, for it failed to challenge "white working-class racism."[clxxxv] Doing so would have been difficult and daring but by not doing so, Barber argues, SDS failed to live up to its critique

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of entrenched liberals and greater society's moral failure. And just as SDS members allowed themselves to attack racism without holding themselves personally accountable or acknowledging their own racial identity, SDS "by and large saw imperialism as something external to the United States, as what the United States did abroad, and not something that wholly shaped the internal life of the country."[clxxxvi]

And so, in Barber's mind, SDS failed, "not because it was too radical…but because it was not radical enough."[clxxxvii] It had failed to live up to its critique, instead coming to "to mirror that mainstream, and…traditional American racial attitudes."[clxxxviii] When SDS collapsed in 1969, its goals had not been realized: there were the same institutions and the same politicians running them. SDS had revealed its unwillingness to renounce its privileged societal status in its members' insistence that they were the movers for social change, not the oppressed individuals in whose name they claimed to speak. Barber writes, "They could not be the humble foot soldiers of a revolution, but had to take the privileged position that was their birthright as young white people—and this in the name of combating that very privilege."[clxxxix] The historical moment had, in Barber's mind, asked privileged youth to look within and evaluate how they were complicit in the system's failings, and to try and change themselves and people like them for the better; it was to help, and not lead, America's oppressed. SDS in the 1960s was "the story of young white people's struggle to understand that they were not a specially favored people destined to free humanity, a struggle to be humble in the face of the great historical drama unfolding before them."[cxc]

Barber's claims are just that—and they should not be taken uncritically as fact. In particular, he skimps over many of the more negative aspects of radicalism, and he doesn't acknowledge the extent to which many SDS members debated the very points that he makes,

instead painting a picture in which SDS was woefully unaware of the contradictions he points out. In fact, debates recorded in *NLN* suggest that many SDS members were urging that New Leftists make the types of sacrifices that their critique demanded.

SDS members often attempted to persuade other members to sacrifice their privileges for the New Left cause. Mike Klonsky, the SDS National Secretary, wrote, "We must attack repression with solidarity. This means rejecting white-skin privilege and raising demands and struggles for the most oppressed sectors first."[cxci] A piece from Les Coleman took a hopeful tone, "We indict the universities…At the schools we are rejecting the false privileges—the stupid privileges—they have offered."[cxcii] Mark Kleiman wrote a peace in which he tried to convince radical high school students not to go to college. He wrote that they should do so even if "going to school is easier than getting a job."[cxciii]

Whether these pleas worked is another question, but the fact that some SDS members—perhaps a core that was, in fact, willing to make the sacrifices they asked of others—were aware that too many in their ranks were unwilling to forgo the privileges society provided them, and which they were attacking at least in rhetoric, is undeniable. SDS was unhappy to find the Marquette protest ended "when Marquette basketball coach McGuire met with his six athletes, and…convinced them that they jeopardized…their careers."[cxciv] Faced with the potential reality that their actions would have financial consequences, the athletes dropped their demonstration. Klonsky recapped another scenario that characterized the lack of willingness to sacrifice.

> While support of the black liberation struggle at Valley State was good, there was a void in the struggle because there was never an attack against white supremacy and the white-skin-privileged position of students at the school. A situation occurred where many white students were willing to get arrested in support of blacks, but were not willing to miss examinations so a strike could be called because failing or missing an examination would challenge the whole privileged position which white students are placed in.[cxcv]

Some SDS members concluded optimistically that the group's increased militancy was a signal that more members were willing to challenge their privileged status. One SDSer wrote that confrontations with police at University of California-Berkeley indicated "that the movement has entered a new stage. The fact that pigs will actually shoot us, like they have been shooting our black and brown brothers for so long."[cxcvi] This was a good sign, the author suggested, a signal of "the beginning of the loss of at least one part of our white skin privileges."[cxcvii] It also signaled to the author, as it might to Barber, that it was time for SDS to get more radical. It was time, the author argued, "to pick up the gun."[cxcviii] Civil rights leader James Forman wrote in to *NLN*, "Our commitment to resist must grow greater and greater."[cxcix] And as one SDS member reminded, the strongest commitment and show of sacrifice did not always have to be violent: "It's easier to shoot a gun than to be willing to be beaten by a police nightstick."[cc]

Other SDS members tried to appeal to the working class and to do so on the basis of shared oppression—and in the hopes of forming a coalition. They insisted that the new exposure of the university as an oppressive institution leveled the playing field—and showed that the middle-class, educated students of SDS were not as privileged as they had once been, or as people supposed. The editors wrote in a *NLN* piece in June 1968, "We know that we are oppressed. The university channels us into the meaningless survival offered in a society of boring, fruitless employment…We are oppressed in different ways."[cci] They continued, "We must link our struggles with those of the industrial working class, with black people, and with the much-oppressed under-employed and unemployed poor in this country."[ccii] And they urged a certain degree of absolutism: "In no case should we ever submerge our anti-racist, anti-imperialist politics to gain popular support."[cciii]

Still others focused more specifically on the Draft. The National Council (NC) included this appeal as a goal for members in 1968. Naimi Jaffe, John Fuerst, and Bob Gottlieb wrote the appeal on behalf of the NC, starting off the piece arguing for strategies whose end should be the "formation of links with non students."[cciv] They identified the Draft as an issue on which both sides could connect, and tried to compare their oppression to that of working-class and non-student populations: "The draft cuts through the fragmentation that divides students from non-students. The privileged status implied by the student deferment is being eroded by the new draft law. The military and university are parallel institutions…both coerce individuals into the roles required to maintain a repressive system."[ccv] The Draft impacts us too, they cried; our privileges are also being lost. Of course, even in this case, the students themselves were not choosing to give up their privilege—it had been taken away from them, and the cynic might say that if it were reinstated they would stop complaining. Also, their attempt to equalize their oppression to that of the working class does not acknowledge how the oppression was different for each group and had different costs.

And there were cynics, even within SDS: Not everyone was so optimistic about the potential of SDS members to sacrifice their privilege for the organization's cause. Carol Schik wrote to *NLN* from Tennessee that "you guys don't have time to frick around trying to radicalize middle-class white students."[ccvi] She went on the question the commitment of these students: "Sure, some of them will risk getting their heads bashed in demonstrations…But when the shit comes down, do you really think any substantial number of these kids will choose to fight in the Revolution rather than retreat to their middle-class security?"[ccvii] There might be some who were willing to sacrifice their privilege but, Schik wrote in, "there are just not enough of them with the potential for…action and long-term commitment."[ccviii]

Clearly, however, the question was being debated more than Barber acknowledged, and some SDS members recognized the need for a more radical commitment to SDS causes. Similarly, although the majority of the organization may have failed to do so, there were also members in SDS who noted, as Barber does, that white working-class racism was a problem that needed to be dealt with. In an article titled "Learn the Lessons of US History," Noel Ignatin shared his reading of the historical background of white working-class racism. He first establishes that there was such racism and states, "I don't believe it is possible to build coalitions of black and white on the basis of the self-interest of each, if the self-interest of the whites means the maintenance of white supremacy and the white-skin privilege."[ccix] He makes the same argument that Barber makes: whites would have to face their own racism, and the racism of the white working class, if they hoped for a coalition with the Black Power movement.

Ignatin argues that working-class whites had been given skin-based privilege by a wealthy elite that knew it needed to strike a deal in order to buffer against potential rebellion, and he asserts that before a coalition is possible, it will be necessary for whites to renounce their white privilege. He wrote, "In the three great eras of struggle I have cited, probably the three greatest in post-Civil War history, in the final analysis the matter came down to this: the power structure was able to solve its problems with the white workers 'within the family', by offering them privileges."[ccx] White workers made a deal—they morally compromised—throughout history and Ignatin demands that all whites, working-class or not, move toward moral absolutism on the issue of racial equality, and that their actions mirror their beliefs and rhetoric—that they renounce their privilege. He continued, "Solidarity between black and white requires more from the white than a willingness to 'help the Negroes up if it doesn't lower us any'. It requires a

willingness to renounce our privileges, precisely to 'lower ourselves' in order that we can all rise up together."[ccxi]

So Ignatin acknowledges what Barber says SDS did not, though Ignatin notes that "in discussing my thesis with movement people, I have sometimes encountered the objection that my approach is a moralistic rather than a materialistic one, that it relies on idealism rather than 'self-interest.'"[ccxii] The moralistic argument required real sacrifice from its adherents, but I, like Barber, might argue that this is exactly what a social movement with high aspirations and demands for change—and the knowledge that this change will have to be forced on the system, and not, as Dovi envisions, incorporated by understanding dirty-hands politicians—needs: more sacrifice and enough moral absolutists (a category that, when the motivation of a movement is moralistic, often overlaps with those lumped together as 'radicals') to drive it.

Barber's claim that SDS unequivocally failed should, like his implicit claim that the issues he brings up were rarely discussed among SDS, also be challenged—I, like Todd Gitlin believe that, despite SDS's failure to bring about more fundamental changes, the group succeeded, through its direct opposition to dirty-hands politicians and a system that over-emphasized consensus and rationality, to bring morality back into politics and open up the possible range of political perspectives. I second Gitlin when he makes the former argument; he writes that "the changes wrought by the Sixties, however beleaguered, averted some of the worst abuses of power."[ccxiii] And the latter point: "Say what we will about the Sixties' failures, limits, disasters, America's political and cultural space would probably not have opened up as much as it did without the movement's divine delirium."[ccxiv]

And yet Gitlin acknowledges that "a generation giddy about easy victories was too easily crushed by defeats, too handily placated…by private satisfactions."[ccxv] He notes, "As the antiwar

movement subsided, many students found it an opportune moment to trade in their activism for a

ticket to the less risky, more pleasurable counterculture."[ccxvi] He writes: "In the early Seventies,

the journey to the interior preoccupied a good half of my old movement friends."[ccxvii] New Left

activism disappeared as SDS crumbled to factionalism in 1969; national economic troubles

plagued the country; the antiwar movement ended with the Draft in 1973; and the Black Power

movement no longer captivated the nation's attention. Had SDS members lacked a certain

absolutist commitment to their cause? Did they lose their activist mentality because their

economic privilege had been threatened? Did their willingness to drop their cause show, as

Barber argues, that their shortcomings were due to their not being radical enough? Gitlin's

description of the New Left's decline gives these questions some import.

> The political and spiritual contraction was matched—partly caused, partly
> reinforced—by the end of the great economic boom of 1945-73…With the cost of
> housing booming, the young could no longer assume that in the natural course of
> things they were going to live more grandly than their parents…When
> postgraduate employment could no longer be taken for granted, life in the margins
> lost much of its glamour…There was no war to galvanize opposition, no
> compelling black movement to inspire white conscience. Imperceptibly, the
> Sixties slid into the Seventies, and the zeitgeist settled down.[ccxviii]

It appears that this passage gives credence to Barber's argument, for it suggests that SDS

members were limited by their unwillingness to fully commit to their cause, or make the

sacrifices necessary to reach the ends for which they hoped. Gitlin reflects, "The New Left's

torment…was that relatively privileged people were fighting on behalf of the oppressed."[ccxix]

Once they emerged from the movement's excitement and found that their privileges might be

threatened, for many members, their activism ended.

Reinforcing Moral Conviction

Any oppositional social movement that faces a system with coercive power needs individuals who are willing to make real, hard sacrifices in the fight for their cause. Even if such individuals only form a small core, they can motivate others on the margins to make their own, smaller sacrifices that otherwise they might not have been willing to make. The heat radiates to the outer circles. Dovi imagines that moral absolutists might reaffirm the commitment of the general populace to morality, and we have already seen how SDS absolutists helped reintroduce moral questions into politics. When the risks are higher, as they typically are in oppositional social movements, this contribution becomes even more central. A strong sense of moral conviction is necessary for moralistic social actors and fringe members of a social movement to meet their potential. From moral conviction comes a willingness to sacrifice. Barber identifies a lack of commitment to sacrifice and radicalism among SDS members; by doing so, he may also be arguing that there weren't enough moral absolutists to shore up members' moral conviction, either.

SDS members at times pointed to a fear among some members to take responsibility for the movement—and express the necessary moral conviction—as a hindrance to its development. Carl Oglesby attacked young liberals for not joining SDS, asserting that their refusal was rooted in fear. He identified what he felt was their "fear of honest thought and its political imperatives; of effecting a clean break with the powerful institutions which have squandered so many lives; of abandoning the security of the system whose outrages you attack; of becoming your own 'base of legitimacy.'"[ccxx] He argued that the odds were against them, but that to recognize the uphill battle in front of them—to not be completely firm in their conviction—was not the right response. He responded to this notion by expressing his own firm conviction: ""That cannot happen.' Perhaps that is true. But since it must happen, it will, and whether it can or not makes

no difference."[ccxxi] Bill Ayers identified defeatism as a problem in a speech he gave in September 1969, a month before the collapse of SDS. Ayers said, "We have to deal WITH THE FACT THAT in a lot of ways all of us have elements of defeatism in us, and don't believe really that we can win, don't really believe that the United States can be beaten."[ccxxii] Was there a need for more moral absolutists, who perhaps irrationally believed that their change would come to fruition?

Members worried, it seems correctly in retrospect, that there weren't enough firmly devoted SDS members to fight the necessary fight. Mark Kleiman's question—"We are either serious about changing things in this country so that we may be free…or we are not—"[ccxxiii] was a real one, and there were indications that for many members, the answer was no—they were not serious. In another piece in which he asked members to stop smoking dope and get serious, Kleiman stated: "If we are committed, we must recognize the responsibility that entails, and begin to live with it."[ccxxiv] Earlier in 1968, a piece by Cathy Wilkerson got at these same questions of fear, responsibility and moral conviction. She urged members to become more committed. She wrote, "In the past, we have been confused and defensive about explicitly stating that, yes, we are for a change that will affect the roots of our society…If we are to take ourselves and our discontent seriously, we must take the responsibility for thinking out the consequences of our ideas, for to toy with men's lives is to negate the content of our values."[ccxxv] She asked that "we become unafraid to feel the full import of being free human beings…[and insisted] that responsibility will become the means to living the kind of lives we have yearned for."[ccxxvi]

If there were individuals like Wilkerson and Oglesby who preached this conviction and acceptance of responsibility—and others who acted on it, some of whom I will detail below— maybe there weren't enough of them for their commitment to ripple outward. Undoubtedly, there

were some SDS absolutists who claimed their conviction was so strong that they were willing to die in their fight. Mark Rudd, SDS National Secretary, separated himself from the revisionist, calling himself the revolutionary. The revisionist is willing to "do just what the bourgeoisie wants, to stop fighting…is a person who believes he can live forever, who wants a painless, riskless way to the revolution."[ccxxvii] A revolutionary, on the other hand, has the resolve "to fight harder...running risks, suffering casualties…A revolutionary, like anyone else, will not live forever. At this stage, he will win or die fighting for the people of the world."[ccxxviii] A speech given at Malcolm X's memorial service and reprinted in *NLN* promised the same type of commitment. It stated, matter-of-factly, "Many of us will go to jail; others will be killed."[ccxxix]

Some SDS members managed to show their conviction—and inspire others in the movement—without the use of violence. There were a number of hunger strikes taken by SDS members to protest their imprisonment and display the strength of their spirit. An eighteen year-old women arrested for protesting in Cincinnati, Ohio "refused to co-operate with the courts in any way."[ccxxx] *NLN* recounted her stand in jail: "She has been fasting since entering the workhouse, and at this time the doctors are fearing that she may have already done irreparable damage to her brain."[ccxxxi] Asked why she was fasting, she simply replied, "'Only in that way can I maintain my inner freedom.'"[ccxxxii]

In another case, it was reported, "All nine people—seven men and two women—who burned Draft files with napalm at Local Draft Board 33 in Catonsville, Maryland (Baltimore County) on Friday, May 17th are continuing their fast in the Baltimore County Jail in Towson."[ccxxxiii] The strikers "requested that the money that would have been used to pay for their food be turned over to the Poor People's Campaign in Washington."[ccxxxiv] Although the actions of moral absolutists can often appear irrational and contrary to the actors' immediate self-

interest, they can inspire others—perhaps because in displaying that very irrationality, they are also showing their strong moral conviction to a cause.

A SDS *NLN* contributor recognized this benefit of moral absolutists when he addressed the shooting by Chicago cops of Dean Johnson—who had shot at the cops first—in September of 1968. The contributor wrote: "People say it was stupid for him to fire at the cop. Maybe it was, stupid—but courageous. A lot of us aren't as stupid. We aren't as courageous, either."[ccxxxv] *NLN* quoted Malcolm X on his birthday, roughly four years after his death: "'Power in defense of freedom is greater than power in behalf of tyranny and oppression, because real power comes from the conviction which produces action, uncompromising action. It also produces insurrection against oppression. The only way you end oppression is with power.'"[ccxxxvi] At least some SDS members recognized that Malcolm X's contribution was more than, as Dovi suggests, just making Martin Luther King, Jr. appear more reasonable—and argued that SDS was missing some of that moral conviction so important to a motivated and effective oppositional social movement.

Concluding Thoughts, and Looking Ahead to the Next Chapter

In this chapter, I have illustrated some of the benefits of powerful moral absolutists in opposition to dirty-hands politicians in power and explained how they improve the greater democracy; I also touched on their importance within an oppositional social movement. In the next chapter, I will advocate for a more conflict-heavy vision of democracy in which the benefits of confrontation and the delineation of lines and stances are promoted.

Chapter Three: The Value of Conflict and Confrontation, Led by SDS Absolutists

In chapter three I present SDS members' arguments for a more conflict-heavy view of democracy than that of dirty-hands theorists, who above all else value consensus. The arguments I present and ultimately endorse, with a caveat that confrontation led by absolutists works best when it is followed by negotiations led by compromisers, values disagreements, even when they are between two uncompromising sides. I argue through SDS members that confrontational politics led by moral absolutists, as it must be because it requires such a high level of moral conviction and a strong willingness to sacrifice oneself for the cause, is important because it can delineate sides, as is sometimes necessary for democracy to progress; expose the system and its faults; and win the oppositional group its demands. I argue against the argument, made by Todd Gitlin and others, that SDS's failures were the result of the organization's absolutist and militant turn. I argue that although sides were delineated and the public largely chose the other side, there were a number of other historical factors that could be cited as responsible for the public's choice—and I wonder aloud if absolutists are not blamed merely because they appear, because of their uncompromising stances, scary and undemocratic—when further consideration of their influence should be granted.

When I argue for the benefits of moral absolutists at all, but especially in opposition to dirty-hands politicians in power, I am embracing a vision of democracy that recognizes the importance and value of—and doesn't seek to force silent—conflict and discord. Consensus is, as most political theorists acknowledge, constructive, but it begins to lose its value as there is less and less to compromise on. *If* there is compromise—and I do not believe that there should or even can *only* be conflict, though it is important to have political consensus sometimes forcefully challenged—it is more meaningful when individuals find common ground despite the presence

of real differences and disagreements—about which each side is passionate.[ccxxxvii] Doing so affirms the strength of the bonds between the parties: each makes a sacrifice because it recognizes the legitimacy of the other's claims or the system in which the parties operate; at the very least, each sees the value in coming to some sort of agreement—a sign of respect for the opposing party. For these individuals who ultimately compromise to be passionate about these issues—and, in certain cases, for them to be willing to compromise on them—they need to know that there are moral absolutists who will never do the same. These absolutists show through their actions and rhetoric that the issues have real import—that they really do matter, that people should feel passionately about them. Compromisers need to know that the fight will continue despite their compromise, that others will stick to the cause and continue to push for it. Absolutists enable individuals to be able to make meaningful compromise.

And there are times when certain issues should, because of their moral seriousness and because they are of direct importance to individuals, divide people. There are issues that are so morally compelling that they should force us to pick a side—and maybe even fight for it. The question of slavery in the United States, for example, was a real and disturbing one over which the bloody Civil War would be each side's only answer. There is a benefit to, when issues come up about which you feel compelled to act, declaring which side you are on and confronting the other side's claims and arguments. People need to be challenged to explain their stances; if they are not, but their opinions are law, they might never feel the need to do so, and policies and actions that should be questioned will be taken as fact. Absolutists are especially important, then, when they play a directly antagonistic role to politicians in power. Often without a direct challenge these politicians are unwilling to consider moral questions, or to even explain their reasoning behind decisions that are of real significance to the people who are affected.

Often it is only unreasonable, irrational moral absolutists driven by their conviction who will lead the challenge against stronger, entrenched political actors. This confrontation is essential, because it can force those actors to consider moral questions; explain their decisions; and it can expose their inconsistencies between rhetoric and action. As showed in the last chapter, for example, it is through confrontation that 'reasonable', democratic men can be shown to act unreasonably, undemocratically, and irresponsibly. It is through confrontation that these actors can be held accountable and forced to live more clearly by their recited values and beliefs—or even to change those values and beliefs so that they are more in line with the wishes of the people. It is through a policy of confrontation and negotiation that SDS would have been most successful in its aims, and this strategy would have required a significant contribution from motivated moral absolutists.

It is through confrontation, typically led by individuals absolutely committed to a cause and willing to sacrifice for it, that the issues of such importance to these individuals and the lines they view as so vital and immovable, can be exposed to a public that otherwise might not have been aware of—or were unwilling to address—these questions. By confronting government directly, moral absolutists can clearly delineate those lines and either build support behind them or, if the public chooses the other side, adjust their own strategies, or even the stances that they had viewed as uncompromisable.

In 1968 and 1969, there were many debates within SDS over which tactics would bring the movement the most success—both immediate and sustained. Most pronounced were those debates between PL, which would in 1968 get booted from SDS, and members of SDS. PL members argued for a base-building approach and preached patience. They viewed increased

militancy and confrontation skeptically, and they preferred to focus on building a coalition with the working class before escalating conflicts with the government and police forces.

The debates within chapters were frequent, and the two sides often failed to come to agreement. In November of 1968 *New Left Notes* ran an article on a split that occurred within Ann Arbor's SDS, and they included a note explaining why: "We are running this long story because we see the situation at Ann Arbor as typical of many SDS chapters throughout the country."[ccxxxviii] The unresolved question centered on the use of confrontational politics. Terry Robbins and Bill Ayers had written one month earlier: "What is clear, however, is that the Ann Arbor chapter is struggling with the most important issue facing the Movement today: that of the use of confrontation and aggressive politics in building a revolutionary consciousness."[ccxxxix] In the November piece, they would counter the common PL argument, writing, "Confrontation, we argued, is a way of building a base."[ccxl] Could confrontation attract support, or would it alienate potential backers of the movement?

Arguments Within the SDS Movement Against Confrontational Politics

There were many individuals—not limited to PL—who argued that confrontational politics could have negative consequences for the movement. One *NLN* article noted "we have moved to direct confrontations with the war machine and with the cops."[ccxli] While the authors recognized that "such militant tactics are a great advance over impotent dissent,"[ccxlii] they feared that they "simply do not go far enough."[ccxliii] First of all, they wrote that such tactics "do not enable us to confront the real power structure of the US."[ccxliv] Confrontations were usually between demonstrators and the coercive arm—the police—of the government, not with the government and its policymakers. Secondly, the writers feared that confrontational politics "do

very little to help us organize and radicalize non-political people; they do little to help us in our task of building a mass radical movement."[ccxlv] In their minds, confrontation was better than not acting at all, but it did not challenge the individuals it needed to; attract enough public support; or help build a strong base from which a powerful movement could emerge.[ccxlvi]

A significant segment of SDS made this argument: that confrontation could be useful, but not right now—that it was first necessary to build a base of public support that would participate in and by galvanized by such demonstrations. A number of authors wrote in a February 1968 *NLN* article, "the concept of 'resistance' with no strategy for victory is just another version of the pacifist, moral witness concept…The whole concept of the present string of 'resistance' demonstrations must lead to a series of tactical defeats."[ccxlvii] Before confrontation there had to be recruitment. The authors continued, "Where SDS chapters have applied a base-building approach, their confrontations have strengthened and broadened anti-imperialist forces. Where they have rushed headlong into super-militant demonstrations or sit-ins, without trying to win over or neutralize the masses of students, they have weakened and isolated themselves."[ccxlviii] In a separate piece, Eric Mann warned members not to "substitute militancy for constituency."[ccxlix] Confrontation could be an effective political strategy, but only if there was support behind it.

What was needed now, these SDSers insisted, was patience. In April 1968, the *NLN* editors made a plea for organizing, and they identified members' impatience as an obstacle. They wrote, "The Movement desperately needs organizers in neighborhoods at this time. Yet the present situation finds most campus-based radicals either critical of slow, in-depth organizing ('it's not where the action is at')."[ccl] But the editors insisted that a short-term, militant- and demonstration-heavy approach to politics would not benefit the organization or lead to its goals being met. They asked for members, then, to make an effort to "comprehend the need for a long-

range perspective."[ccli] They advised that people try and help advance SDS goals from their professions—which they assumed members would move into before the organization's plans could come to fruition. Rich Rothstein went so far as to write in a separate article that "the organization of the base for a popular American revolution may take 10, 20, or 30 years."[cclii] Confrontation could work, but not for quite some time; the editors and Rothstein advised that members play the waiting game.

If they rushed ahead solely or primarily with militant actions, there was a fear among some SDS members that confrontational politics might scare off potential supporters and delay or derail the base-building project. Eric Mann worried about that SDS was not projecting the warmth and humanity that he knew was present and integral to the organization. He wrote, "Since we are not in power, we often assume an aggressive, hostile style in many of our actions. While this is necessary at times, it often creates the impression that radicals are humorless, even insensitive people."[ccliii] He suggested confrontation continue—acknowledging that "there are certain situations in which such confrontations are politically valuable—" but pushed for the movement to act in other ways as well, so as to project a more welcoming environment that might attract more public support.[ccliv] Mann worried that disorganized, individual, bloody and violent confrontations would become the face of the organization; he urged that "resistance shouldn't be defined as a series of sporadic, militant demonstrations…[but] a total political style."[cclv] He wanted more programs, and he also suggested that compromising could be the right choice in certain circumstances. He wrote, "In some situations, by taking the programmatic initiative and developing alliances with liberal student-government types and liberal faculty members, we can win our demands."[cclvi] Mann feared that too much of an emphasis on

confrontation might limit the movement's ability to act and, by making it appear less palatable to the public, lead the movement toward isolation.

If all the public saw was SDS in bloody disputes with officers, members like Mann feared that the vast majority would side with the enemy. Mark Spiegel and Jeff Jones wrote that a violent confrontation at the Democratic National Convention would lead the public to do just that: "The main problem we see is the high potential for playing right into Johnson's hands, permitting him to more easily declare us the enemy of the American people and more easily repress us."[cclvii] People were unlikely to draw positive conclusions from images of violence, especially when those in charge—according to SDS—spun events to make it look like protestors were in the wrong. Spiegel and Jones urged SDS to take a long-term approach to planning and to make sure that members weren't giving the police an opportunity to seize on confrontation to justify to the public cracking down more violently on protestors in the future. They wrote, "Last summer the Chicago cops came down heavy on the organizing protests, and this summer we may be giving them an excuse to finish the job."[cclviii] Spiegel and Jones, then, based their opposition to confrontation in the argument that violent confrontation would harm the organization's long-term goals.

Even if SDS members remained committed to non-violent principles in theory, some members feared—especially in reference to the Democratic National Convention—that considering the other side's aggressive preparation for and response to protests, non-violent confrontation would be impossible. Spiegel and Jones wrote in that March 4, 1968 edition of *NLN*—months before the August Convention—that non-violent confrontation was not a realistic option, because of the other side: "Next, to envision non-violent demonstrations at the Convention is the indulge in pleasant fantasizing. It should be clear to anyone who has been

following developments in Chicago that a non-violent demonstration would be impossible. We would suggest that [President Lyndon] Johnson expects violence at this year's Convention."[cclix] The idea of confrontation might be appealing, especially if the goal was to protest non-violently, but SDS members feared that they would not be allowed to confront the system in the way they wanted.

Some SDS members feared that a move toward militancy and violent confrontation would not only be harmful for public relations, but might also lead the organization away from its founding principles, once expressed in democratic and non-violent terms. The uncited author of one *NLN* piece criticized the idea that democratic practices within the organization would have to be put on hold if it hoped to succeed in its revolutionary goals. The author dismissed calls for the development of a disciplined cadre organization as an "excuse for authoritarian measures."[cclx] The author also expressed a minority view within SDS by arguing that SDS militants were provoking the government, and not the other way around: "But a political strategy that attempts to provoke the government into arresting its people shouldn't be called repressed."[cclxi] In this author's view, an insistence on militancy was really a move away from the organization's core views, and if anything exposed SDS, and not the government, as being undemocratic.

Arguments within the SDS Movement for Confrontational Politics

SDS members made a number of arguments in favor of confrontational politics, but they most often claimed that direct confrontation with the government, its police forces or any individuals who they viewed as emblematic of the country's problems was beneficial because it helped to delineate sides and stances, both important because the public could see those sides and

potentially choose SDS over dirty-hands politicians and also because declaring themselves in

opposition to and separate from the current system strengthened SDS members' critique of that

system in its entirety; exposed a government that was corrupted and undemocratic; showed dirty-

hands politicians that SDS meant business and increased SDS's negotiating power to get its

demands met; and because confrontation helped drive enthusiasm within the movement and

attracted people to join and get involved. Most of these advocates expressed a desire to engage in

non-violent militant confrontation, but as violence between protestors and police in 1968 became

more common, many of them at least recognized that the confrontations they were supporting

and calling for would involve some violence.

Delineating Sides

Some SDS members argued that confrontation with moral compromisers in power could

help clarify to the public how their political stances were different from the ones held by those

politicians. The editors of one *NLN* issue wrote, "And you're either on one side or the other. The

people who want freedom are all on one side. The pigs of the world are on the other."[cclxii] The

pigs of the world included anyone who didn't hold SDS's views—but one goal in particular was

to make clear that SDS was not a liberal organization. The University of Chicago SDS explained

one such effort: "We decided that what was needed was a dramatic confrontation, before

thousands of people, between liberals working for McCarthy and Kennedy, and radicals."[cclxiii]

SDS did not want to be misunderstood as part of the liberal establishment they aimed to criticize.

Hari Dillon of the San Francisco State SDS summarized many peoples' feelings when she wrote

in *NLN*, "Liberalism is a deceptive diversionary strategy used to co-opt many honest individuals

and groups into supporting the status quo."[cclxiv] SDS did not want to be associated with

liberalism, as members felt that liberals were largely the problem.

SDS wanted to provide an alternative, and they wanted people to know that they were

doing so. Mark Spiegel wrote, "Thus, our response must be prepared to meet [the system] on all

levels with alternate values."[cclxv] The authors of one article, who would actually go on to say that

an effort should be made to avoid a violent confrontation at the Democratic National Convention

in Chicago, still argued that "the general strategy which leads to confrontation with the DNC [is]

a good one; that in the face of the Convention we should stand clearly to declare which side we

are on and to project that stance to the American people."[cclxvi] SDS wanted to make clear that

they offered an alternative to the liberal establishment: confronting that establishment was the

strongest way to make that opposition clear.

SDS members felt that the Vietnam War and the Black Power movement, along with a

political system they viewed as corrupted, were black-and-white issues of great moral import,

and they felt that everyone should feel as strongly and take a side—specifically, theirs. They

wanted to make clear which side they were on, and to show that the politicians in office were

acting immorally—that being reasonable and compromising really meant ignoring and violating

moral principles. SDSer Les Coleman wrote about the university system, "Make it clear. We are

taking our stand against universities."[cclxvii] It was 'us' or 'them'—and Coleman wanted to

announce to the public that SDS not only opposed 'them' but also provided an alternative. He

wrote, "We understand that an educational system functions to maintain the values of the society

(the values that maintain the society itself.) But they are not our values, brothers and sisters. And

it's ours against theirs."[cclxviii] The time to waver had ended; there could be no compromise. He

asked: "Are you with us—or with them?"[cclxix]

The goal was to force people to choose a side: SDS felt that on issues of civil rights and the Vietnam War, there should be no compromise; it was our side or theirs. SDS members famously called for militant student takeovers like the one at Columbia University, when students occupied five buildings on the University's campus to protest what they saw as Columbia's "exploitation of the neighboring community and protecting US interests and exploitation of Third World countries."[cclxx] One of the most publicized confrontations between SDS and police forces, many SDS members pointed to Columbia as a positive example of what could come from a strategy of confrontation against a more powerful foe.

In their minds, SDS benefitted from the clear delineation of sides that resulted from the confrontation. SDS members wrote, "We have won much—a whole student body polarized in our direction, exposure of the liberal façade in its true totalitarian form."[cclxxi] They argued that direct confrontation had forced individuals to take sides: "By taking the buildings (especially [University President Grayson] Kirk's office), we were putting our enemies up against the wall, forcing them to take sides."[cclxxii] They painted the confrontation as the only available recourse under what they claimed were oppressive and undemocratic circumstances. One member wrote:

> The actions we took, occupying buildings, were the only ones available to us to win just demands. Nearly everyone—except, again, the administration—has admitted the justice of our demands. Some people object to the tactics we employed: we 'should have used the 'legitimate channels'' to achieve our ends. There is a very simply answer in reply: we had exhausted all legitimate channels before we took the buildings.[cclxxiii]

The individual continued, "Since 'legal means' had been exhausted, and since there was no administration response to traditional civil-disobedience tactics, our only recourse was to take extra-legal actions to win our just demands."[cclxxiv] The actions of the other side demanded militant confrontation, which had not been the first preference of SDS. SDS was prepared to act democratically, but they argued that the University had lost any right to make democratic claims.

The author wrote, "Since Columbia University exists by exploiting the oppressed of this country and the world, the administration is totally illegitimate."[cclxxv] For those who so seriously doubted the democratic commitment of those in power, confronting them was not part of an effort to get them to listen to their pleas. The goal instead was to reveal to the public the dirty-hands leaders' moral corruption and repressive tendencies, and by doing so win public support—and ultimately force those leaders from their positions.

SDS members, then, did not necessarily expect or want an understanding response from the individuals they confronted. They wrote, "Given the threat to the ruling class represented by our tactics and our politics, immediate military repression, as in Vietnam and the ghettos, was the only answer."[cclxxvi] Admitting that the University had no choice but to call in the police and respond violently to the student takeover, the protestors nevertheless saw value in the confrontation. *NLN* editors wrote, "Those in power cannot—often will not—concede any part of their power, rightly understanding that their power will fall according to the 'domino theory'. They must respond with force."[cclxxvii] And so the goal was not, and these SDS members did not expect, compromise—what they wanted was surrender. A speech by 'Brother Robert' at Malcolm X's memorial service found its way into *NLN*; it encouraged this all-or-nothing outlook. Brother Robert said, "They [the rulers, President Johnson] have begun to understand that we are their enemy, that for us to have our freedom means that they will have to give up their control, their 'American way of life.'"[cclxxviii] Confrontation could show the other side that you were serious—that for the chaos to end, what was required was their unconditional surrender.

For some, a confrontation like the one at Columbia was useful not only as a way to attract new members, but also because the commitment and militancy of activists on display there could

serve to inspire and motivate individuals who already identified as SDS members. Member

Morgan Spector feared that the movement was "affected with a strange kind of malaise."[cclxxix]

Conflict and confrontation could energize the base; just watching people committed to a cause

and willing to sacrifice for it might push you to do the same. Spector wrote, "We realized,

though we never said as much, that the essential ingredient of our survival was conflict. As long

as there was conflict, there would be a reason for us to act, and room for us to act."[cclxxx] A later

editorial pushing for more militancy made a similar argument, and the authors connected

confrontation with a willingness among members of the base to act. It viewed Columbia and

confrontations like it as a springboard for activism: "Last summer, picking up off the siege of

Columbia, with the images of France fresh in our minds, was the first time that white kids got

heavy into moving in the streets in a widespread way. Columbia showed us it was possible—

necessary—to take the offensive."[cclxxxi] After watching students put their privilege on the line,

other members followed their lead, becoming more militant themselves. And so it was that many

SDS members extolled confrontation, taking on the Columbia students' chant: "'One,

two…many Columbias.'"[cclxxxii]

Only once people had chosen their side and, SDS hoped, committed to its causes, could

action be taken against the establishment. One article introduced a sense of panic: the police

were trying to take out Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) leader Rap Brown;

it was time to make a move. The article continued: "A key question we must face, answer and

ACT ON is clear: WHICH SIDE ARE WE ON?"[cclxxxiii] The author imagined that clarity would

lead to action and imbue fellow citizens with a commitment to the cause: "Will our silence insure

that Rap and the black people of this country are imprisoned or killed? Or will our voices and

actions make it crystal-clear in every part of this country that we are supporting our black

brothers in every way possible?"[cclxxxiv] This fear of being silent and not letting the public know about SDS initiatives and goals was a common one. One member wrote more extremely, "We are excluded because we have refused to be good Germans."[cclxxxv] It was necessary to get out and speak up for your beliefs, and against those of the politicians in power; if you failed to do so, those complaints might never get aired and you would be witness to horrible injustices—in which you shared a hand because of your inaction.

Further, once the sides were clearly delineated, the argument went, SDS members and their public supporters could more accurately and effectively target the enemy. Stephen Lippman of high school SDS wrote longingly of the ability of striking workers at the *Herald Examiner* to do just that; he hoped SDS could learn from their example. Lippman wrote, "Unlike some of the so-called 'Resistance' we've seen, the workers knew who their enemy was and directed their attacks at Hearst, the scabs, and the cops—not innocent bystanders."[cclxxxvi] Further, Lippman implied that this certainty over which side they were on—and the 'us' versus 'them' mentality that makes it easier to be completely morally committed to a cause and willing to sacrifice for it—allowed the workers to adopt the militant stance he felt SDS members were too reluctant to take. He admired of the strike, "And no one meekly submitted to police repression."[cclxxxvii] Lippman felt this conviction was missing with SDS; he followed with a quote: "As 1 worker said, 'We ain't no Hippies!'"[cclxxxviii] The certainty that came with knowing one's side could inspire conviction and with it the sacrificial action necessary to spur the changes of which so many SDS members spoke.

As with many of its goals and initiatives, SDS derived some of its penchant for delineating sides via confrontation from the Black Power movement. Bernardine Dohrn, who would eventually become part of the extremist and violent Weatherman faction, looked to Huey

Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party, for guidance while she was still a member of

SDS. Dohrn quoted Newton's advice for white radicals in the July 29, 1968 issue of *New Left*

Notes. In the passage, Newton asserts that action can only be taken once firm lines are drawn and

the individual has chosen a side: "So the role of the mother country [white] radical, and he does

have a role, is to first choose his friend and his enemy and after doing this…then to not only

articulate his desires to regain his moral standard and realign himself with his humanity, but also

to put this into practice by attacking the protectors of this institutions."[cclxxxix] Only once the

individual had chosen a side and committed could he make the type of sacrifices necessary for

the movement's success.

Exposing the System

In the previous chapter I argued that moral absolutists can benefit democracy by holding

dirty-hands politicians accountable—not only morally but also, when those absolutists are

invested in democratic ideals, for failing to live up to—or for violating—democratic principles

and practices. A common argument among those in favor of confrontational politics was that it

was only through such direct challenges to their hold on power that dirty-hands politicians would

explicitly reveal their true, undemocratic nature—and the undemocratic nature of the system that

sustained them. Since it was not in the best interests of those in power for undemocratic practices

to be exposed, the argument went, confrontation was necessary for such information to be

released.

Tom Hayden argued that confrontation was a necessary SDS tactic in an interview with

NLN just weeks before what would turn out to be a very large confrontation at the 1968

Democratic National Convention. One of his central arguments hinged on exposure. He hoped

that confronting liberals non-violently and being violently repressed would "shatter that façade of so-called democracy at the Convention."[ccxc] He felt that the public needed to see—and *would* see because of SDS confrontation—that the current democratic system did not allow for meaningful change. He commented, "We can organize demonstrations against the appearance of the candidates and show politically that none of the three major parties represent the opinion in the country…We can have an enormous number of arrests [later, on Election Day,] to again demonstrate that the whole political system is not working, is not operative."[ccxci] Todd Gitlin wrote that Hayden hoped to expose "pseudo-democratic politics" by confronting the government and its coercive forces in Chicago.[ccxcii]

Like Hayden, Mike Spiegel argued that the current political system and its actors did not act democratically and that there was no true democratic representation of the people's interests. He said in a speech that "no candidate out of those parties can solve the basic, root problems of America, the solutions to which are founded on an opposition to the power of that ruling class."[ccxciii] He went on, "Finally, we must explain the electoral process and the two major parties as arms of the ruling class, and put forward the position that consequently there is no solution to the basic problems of this society which issues from those parties."[ccxciv] They imagined that the violent repression of protestors would not only delineate SDS's stances from those held by liberals, but also that they would show that liberals were unwilling to allow for democratic dissent. One SDS member wrote that the confrontation at the Convention showed that what "school children learn, and politicians believe, that the American political system approaches perfection…The militant delegations at the Convention broke both these precepts."[ccxcv] Hayden and others argued that it was through confrontation that the system and more importantly its current actors could be revealed as undemocratic—and SDS as a democratic alternative.

Spiegel would go on in his speech to insist that now was a better time than ever to confront the system and its actors. He said, "Here at home, militant blacks and Draft resisters and organizers will bear the brunt of repression…Both of these struggles have the seeds, necessary but sufficient, of a direct confrontation with State power—the non-co-optable issue."[ccxcvi] In Spiegel's view, the current political climate, because of the Black Power movement and the direct threat of the Draft to so many white citizens, could inspire in protestors the willingness to confront a more powerful system. The goal of this confrontation, according to Spiegel, was to expose the brutal nature of the government—and in doing so, inspire in the people a revolutionary consciousness. He said of confrontational struggles that "they carry the greatest possibilities now of increasing consciousness—of understanding the nature of the real enemy…[the struggles must] build a consciousness that the State is the mechanism of repressive force, that it is through the state that the ruling class exercises its power."[ccxcvii] Being violently repressed was, in Spiegel's view, a positive contribution to the movement because it exposed the true, undemocratic nature of the political actors in power.

Like Siegel, a number of SDS radicals made the argument that it was only once the government had been exposed through confrontation that the people, finally recognizing the real nature of that government, would be inspired to fight the revolution. Rich Rothstein wrote that revolution was clearly the right option for most Americans—they just had to understand the situation correctly. Rothstein wrote, "A popular American revolution is in the interest of the vast majority of Americans who are exploited economically, emotionally, and socially by the present structure of American capitalism."[ccxcviii] Since the system tried to cover up that exploitation, it was necessary to force that reality out. He wrote that "it is possible to expose to this majority the mechanisms by which they are manipulated and exploited in their day-to-day lives; but until

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these mechanisms are exposed, a popular American revolution is impossible."[ccxcix] Fighting for such exposure would require commitment and sacrifice; Rothstein insisted that "only those organizers who sincerely empathize with the plight of the American majority can be in a position to expose this exploitation."[ccc] But in Rothstein's mind that exposure was essential, as only through the exposure of government's and the democratic (and capitalist) system's moral corruption could SDS members convince the public that it was in their interests to take risks in the name of revolution.

There was similar talk regarding the confrontation at Columbia University. J. Wesley Harding wrote in to *NLN* about the growing political consciousness that he felt was a direct result of the confrontation at the University. Harding wrote, "What is really exciting is the growth in political understanding—a growth which parallels exactly the increasing militancy of the students. Growing numbers of students have had their minds exploded with anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-capitalist consciousness."[ccci] And like Rothstein, Harding argued that that consciousness was a revolutionary one: "The word revolution is not thrown around as it has been in the past. There are no illusions about a free university in an unfree society."[cccii] Confrontation had drawn lines between the two groups and shown the coercive and undemocratic aspects of those in power: like Rothstein, Harding felt this exposure was necessary for and led to a revolutionary consciousness—though these supposed revolutionaries, as it was shown earlier, were expected to hold on to their democratic goals and ideals.

Confrontation As A Politically Viable Strategy,

For the reasons above, but also many others, many SDS members argued for the benefits of confrontation. There were those who argued that it was the best way to attract public support

for the SDS cause. Tom Hayden made this argument in the same pre-Convention interview with *NLN* cited earlier. One of the ways he foresaw confrontation being useful to the organization's recruiting efforts was in terms of increasing SDS's public visibility. He said of the confrontation in Chicago: "First, it is a way of surfacing, in a very militant way, the anti-war movement after a period in which it has been knocked out."[ccciii] He did not view confrontation as the only useful tool for attracting public support, but he claimed that it served an important role in any social movement. Hayden commented, "In principle, anybody who's been involved in local organizing, as I was…knows that an occasional confrontation and mobilization can be a great advantage…It can make you visible to people you want to organize."[ccciv] Seeing people committed to a cause and fighting for it might make other individuals think about that cause for the first time, and potentially join the fight. Hayden also believed that direct confrontation was useful because it provided a direct injection of energy into the base. He proposed that "local organizing can become stagnant like a pool of water unless it's stirred occasionally with mobilization tactics."[cccv]

There was a sense that action was better than theorizing; that the chaos that was associated with confrontation would play into the protestors' hands; and that it could energize an otherwise lackluster base of support. John M. Lamb wrote in to *NLN*, "A confrontation at the Democratic Convention will not play into [President Lyndon] Johnson hands, because riots, disruption, and mobilization of the National Guard all tend to undermine confidence in and support for the people in power."[cccvi] The public would see that the government could not control—was oppressing—its people, and that those people were upset enough to put their lives at risk, and it would side with the protestors.

Some pushed for confrontation because they felt that it was the best way to express that the movement was committed to its cause and willing to act and sacrifice on behalf of it; it was a way to respond to criticisms that SDS members were only serious in rhetoric. A piece in *NLN* titled "Respect for Lawlessness," and credited to 'Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers,' epitomized this attitude. It read, "IT IS NO LONGER ENOUGH TO RAISE CONSCIOUSNESS. THAT CONSCIOUSNESS MUST BE EXPRESSED."[cccvii] There was a push within SDS to act more radically—more militantly. Authors in one *NLN* article complained, "Despite the rhetoric of resistance, there has, up to now, been no qualitative shift in our activity…For all the militant rhetoric and revolutionary slogans, the substance of the campaigns is politically minimal."[cccviii] The solution lay in direct, militant confrontation. The authors wrote: "At this point we must recognize that SDS should be aiming at…radical politics."[cccix] From confrontation and conflict came action: A *NLN* article read, "Key to all this is the need for militancy, the need for struggle…we learn from every organizing situation that people change from being challenged, and that it is in situations of sharp conflict that people are forced to act."[cccx]

An Argument for Confrontation, then Negotiation

I have suggested that moral absolutists and compromisers can and should play complementary roles within a social movement. Moral absolutists can use their conviction and commitment to the cause to confront those who are more powerful and show that the group is serious in its critique. By doing so, they can raise the group's bargaining power—at which point the moral compromisers in the group can step in and make deals. Of course, the absolutists in the group might oppose the second stage of negotiation, but if they are truly committed to the cause and they recognize that not everyone in the movement will share their absolutist view, they may

sacrifice their insistence on absolutism during a negotiation process because they recognize that such steps are necessary for building up a necessary base of public support behind their cause. After all, most oppositional social movements have absolutists at their core, but not throughout the ranks—a fact accepted by that core.

A series of events at Northwestern University (NU) in the spring of 1968 illustrate how a strategy of confrontation and negotiation can potentially lead a social movement toward the completion of its goals. The conflict started when the Afro-American Student Union (AASU) of Northwestern drew up a list of fourteen demands and presented it to the University administration. The students took a firm tone to begin with; Jim Turner spoke for the group at a press conference, saying: '"We want a definite response on each demand by dinnertime tonight. We simply demand an affirmative or a negative statement on each one of the fourteen points. If the Administration does not satisfactorily accept the demands there will be a confrontation tomorrow.'"[cccxi] They threatened confrontation and insisted that their requests be considered immediately, but their language was not fully absolutist—there was an indication that while they were serious, they might be willing to negotiate: they did not insist that the administration meet all their demands, but rather that it meet them 'satisfactorily'—a noteworthy word because of its vagueness.

But the oppositional group would show the next day that it meant business. When there was no immediate answer from the Administration, AASU followed through with its threat. *NLN* recapped: "NU black students seized control of the University Financial Affairs building at 619 Clark Avenue in a quickly-executed action at 7:40 a.m. Friday, after the Administration had failed to respond to the AASU demands."[cccxii] As the day went on the protestors attracted more student support, but it was still unclear if the Administration was taking them seriously. And so

instead of being despondent, the group escalated its confrontation: they meant business. *NLN* wrote, "At 11:45 a.m., twenty white students took control of the Dean of Students' office on the second floor of Scott Hall."[cccxiii] Inspired by the black students' confrontational tactics, white students joined the fight, and this time—threatened by a coalition and also by the group's growing militancy—the Administration started to listen. It didn't take long: "Negotiations between AASU leadership and Dean of Students Roland Hinz began at noon."[cccxiv] Only once confrontations had threatened the power of those higher up in the hierarchy could negotiations begin.

Not that success via negotiation came immediately: it was a process during which the oppositional group continually had to assert its seriousness and its ability and willingness to threaten those in power. Negotiations between the group and administrators lasted from noon to five P.M., when they were "broken off," only to start up again at 6:30 P.M.[cccxv] After a full day of discussion with the Administration, it was the oppositional group that dictated the pace of negotiation: "At 10:30 p.m. [University President] Hinz returned to the steps of the Finance Building and was told that the black student leadership were exhausted and that they would be prepared to negotiate again at 8 a.m. Saturday."[cccxvi]

After another full day dedicated to negotiation, the protestors won—and they won big. *NLN* wrote, "All of the black demands were met except for the demand for control over the hiring of black faculty members. This point was resolved by the Administration's 'strong suggestion' to the faculty that black professorships be offered…There will be no disciplinary action taken against any white or black students."[cccxvii] Issues of great moral and practical import to AASU that were initially ignored or dismissed by the Administration were ultimately resolved largely in the oppositional group's favor, first through confrontation—and then through

negotiation. The group was not necessarily split into moral absolutists and moral compromisers, but its members seemed to take on the different attitudes when it seemed most to their advantage to be absolute or compromising. They were, therefore, unwilling to budge on their demand that the Administration pay them heed and backed up their claims by confronting and threatening the legitimacy of those in power; and they were willing to compromise on at least one of their demands, recognizing that even if they had not been able to achieve everything they had wanted, their agreement with the Administration signaled progress for their cause.

Eric Mann was optimistic when he suggested in a *NLN* article that preceded the NU events that "confrontation and negotiation will be the dominant political style in the immediate future."[cccxviii] But there were not many events that so clearly and effectively illustrated the benefits of confrontation and negotiation, and absolutists and compromisers often appeared unwilling to acknowledge the potential benefits that the other side could provide. In the piece, Mann pleads with radicals to consider the potential benefits of negotiation, but while he recognizes the benefits of confrontation, he does not ask individuals more inclined toward compromise to recognize the benefits of radicals. Mann addresses the radicals when he says, "In some situations, by taking the programmatic initiative and developing alliances with liberal student-government types and liberal faculty members, we can win our demands."[cccxix] He criticizes the absolutist assumption "that the response of corporate-liberal university administrators [to SDS demands] will be blanket opposition."[cccxx] Surely Mann is right when he insists that SDS strategy should not solely be confrontation—but also negotiation. But just as compromisers are vital to making the latter strategy effective, absolutists are important for the first step when they oppose an entrenched group that ignores the opposition's voice and demands.

Why Confrontation Didn't Work

In this chapter I have discussed some of the arguments made within SDS for and against confrontational politics. I have identified potential benefits of a confrontational and conflict-appreciative view of democratic politics, and I have noted some of the claims made in defense of famed SDS confrontations at Columbia and the Democratic National Convention, to name only two. And yet while I wouldn't go as far as David Barber in calling SDS a failure, I think it is difficult to contest that SDS did not achieve the type of fundamental change that it had set out, at least in rhetoric and sometimes in practice, to make. Nor does it seem right to think of a group that splintered into fighting factions and then disappeared altogether in 1969 a complete success. SDS did not, for most of its existence, solely practice confrontational politics, and surely the organization's failures are not attributable to the one tactic. But as the public's response to the Democratic National Convention melee shows, confrontations did not always bring about the positive results that SDS hoped it would. Since I connected an absolutist commitment to a cause to a willingness to sacrifice oneself to potential harm in a confrontation against a more powerful political foe, and since this thesis is about the contribution of moral absolutists to democracy and oppositional social movements, it makes sense to look at why these confrontations didn't always succeed—and what that means for arguments in defense of confrontational politics and moral absolutists.

On its surface and with the mentioned arguments in favor of confrontational politics in mind, the confrontation at the Democratic National Convention in 1968 might on the surface appear as if it would be an illustrative example of the political success that can result from that strategy. After all, lines were clearly drawn, and descriptions of the clash in chapter two suggest

that what SDS members viewed as the repressive, violent, and arguably undemocratically impatient and intolerant nature of the dirty-hands politicians and their coercive forces were exposed. Police brutality against protestors, particularly in front of the Conrad Hilton Hotel, was broadcast throughout the country and world. And the demonstrators that did show up were courageous and, if the public was so inclined, potentially inspiring. Gitlin wrote of them, "Those who braved Chicago were determined, at the least, not to be intimidated."[cccxxi] Perhaps they would, by showing their own commitment to it, motivate others to join and fight for their cause.

By all indications, then, it seems that the confrontation would be a politically successful one for SDS. Gitlin, who found himself in Chicago among the chaos, describes wavering between feeling optimistic and disillusioned. He writes, "Was it streetfighting or revolution? Was the feeling desperation or exultation?"[cccxxii] He was at times optimistic: It seemed that police brutality was driving home the SDS critique that members had pushed for so long. He writes, "The astounding fact is…that we were *winning*."[cccxxiii] Gitlin wondered, "Had we stumbled into a people's war against the cops, in which every repressive move by the authorities would ricochet back at them?"[cccxxiv] Was SDS finally driving home its point—had they finally exposed the establishment to be the morally corrupted institution they insisted it was?

Gitlin writes that Tom Hayden encouraged those gathered in Chicago to think of the confrontation as the start of a revolution. According to Gitlin, Hayden spoke in a serious, moralist tone of revolution—and seemed clear in his willingness to make sacrifices in order to make it happen. He recalls, "I heard Tom Hayden speak, in chillingly cavalier tones, about street actions which would run the risk of getting people killed,"[cccxxv] though he notes that there were others who "thought the risks were too great and the ethics wrong, and spoke up for nonviolent witness."[cccxxvi] But Hayden's conviction and energy stuck. Gitlin says, "Those were the days in

which Hayden appeared, *moraliste extraordinaire*, in the dreams of more than one Old New

Leftist."[cccxxvii] And there *was* a sense that this was the start of something real—that finally there

was *action* behind the revolutionary SDS rhetoric. Says Gitlin, "We were awash in the purity of

the we-versus-them feeling on the streets, the crazy battlefield sense that all of life was

concentrated *right here*, forever."[cccxxviii] Was this the kind of spark that confrontation could

provide to a movement?

Gitlin and other SDS members present at the confrontation were at the very least

convinced that the police brutality caught on video and witnessed by journalists would give

credence to the SDS argument that the system was morally corrupted and its politicians were

acting undemocratically. They assumed that the public would, now that the lines were even more

clearly drawn and the violence of the other side exposed, jump to SDS's defense. How could the

public not side with SDS, after seeing what Gitlin saw at the Hilton?

> At the corner of the Hilton, a little later, two phalanxes of cops blocked what was
> left of Dave Dellinger's would-be [nonviolent] march, and after a series of
> scuffles they scythed into the crowd in apparent unison, smashing heads and
> limbs and crotches, yelling 'Kill, kill, kill,' spraying bystanders and
> demonstrators with Mace, squeezing the trapped, terrified crowd until one
> demonstrator wearing boots had the presence of mind to kick through the
> window of the Haymarket Lounge, shattering it, and some people scampered and
> others were shoved through, many slashed by glass, only to be pursued inside
> and then clubbed and knocked around again by police screaming 'Get out of
> here, you cocksuckers'…One Mobe [National Mobilization Committee]
> organizer who tried to restore order was battered between his legs and on his
> head (twenty-two stitches) as he tried to negotiate a truce with the deputy
> superintendent of police.[cccxxix]

To Gitlin, it was inconceivable that the public might side with the police. The lines were

clearly drawn, and SDS was in the right: it was that simple. And so he and the rest of SDS were

shocked when the public did, in fact, choose the other side. Gitlin writes of the distressing news,

"To our innocent eyes, it defied common sense that people could watch even the sliver of the

onslaught that got onto television and side with the cops—which in fact was precisely what the polls showed."[cccxxx] It appeared that at some point the SDS movement had become unattractive to the general public—perhaps even more unattractive than the Vietnam War. Gitlin comments, "As unpopular as the war had become, the antiwar movement was detested still more—the most hated political group in America, disliked even by most of the people who supported immediate withdrawal from Vietnam."[cccxxxi] The confrontation in Chicago had made clear to the public the different sides; showed the other side to be violent; and displayed to the public many SDS members' commitment to the organization's cause and fight. But it failed to do the thing that all these developments were meant to lead toward: it didn't win over the greater public to SDS as the alternative to the current system (the confrontation did, however, lead to a jump in student involvement and membership in the organization).[cccxxxii]

According to Gitlin, it was this failure with the general public that led members to further isolate themselves and the movement from the greater society it had once aimed to win over; harden their views; zero in on an unrealistic revolution; and ultimately, because of fights amongst themselves, to destroy the organization. David Barber comments of Gitlin and other scholars who he assigns to the "traditional liberal school"[cccxxxiii] of thought on SDS: "Represented by scholars and former activists like Todd Gitlin, Maurice Isserman, and Tom Hayden, this liberal school argues that the New Left uncritically followed in the wake of the Black Power movement, substituted rage for reason, and collapsed when this rage alienated mainstream Americans."[cccxxxiv] When SDS lost the support of the American mainstream, then, it is argued by this 'liberal school' that SDS mistakenly made an absolutist and militant turn that spelled the end of the organization and its valuable critique.

Gitlin does indeed appear to make this argument. He says in his book that SDS didn't know how to respond to the lack of public support following the Democratic National Convention confrontation, and that it was after the confrontation that the group made the fatal mistake of becoming more militant and absolutist—instead of pausing to consider why the public had rejected its critique, and adjusting its strategies to make its arguments more palatable. Gitlin reflects, "I was hardly alone in taking Chicago as a revelation that there was 'no turning back'. Much of the movement felt that way."[cccxxxv] He writes that much of SDS didn't come to terms with the public's response, or viewed their growing isolation as a positive sign: "Having unmasked the Democrats as Democrats, the late New Left convinced itself that the movement's unpopularity was either skin-deep or a proof of our revolutionary mettle, or both."[cccxxxvi] He comments, "Now, the movement's will and moral seriousness, unhinged from real possibilities, hardened into our own cage."[cccxxxvii] The moral absolutism that he blames for ending the organization, then, he connects to a sense of desperation and disconnect from political reality.

In Gitlin's mind, SDS opposition to the government was never rooted in a desire among members to take power themselves. The push came from the critique. He writes, "Clarity might have answered: The movement, whatever it says, has no serious intention of ruling; we are once and for all a *youth* movement, aiming to reform our elders."[cccxxxviii] The goal was to expose the dirty-hands politicians, but that was the end of it: revolution had never been on the table. He writes, "We had committed ourselves to 'demystifying' institutions, but once the mask of legitimacy was stripped away to reveal brute force—at Columbia, in Chicago—then what?"[cccxxxix] Gitlin claims then, that the movement aimed to critique the dirty-hands politicians in power—to reform them—but not to overthrow them; talk of revolution came from desperation, and a failure to come to terms with the political reality.

Gitlin suggests that the absolutism and militancy that followed the Chicago confrontation was a tool that SDS members used to protect themselves against having to face the political reality: it was the easy way out. He writes, "I wasn't the only radical who felt more comfortable in the clarity of an all-or-nothing scenario."[cccxl] Talking of revolution allowed members to dream, even if it did ultimately lead to the collapse of the organization. Gitlin writes, "To invoke The Revolution was to claim title to the future; to see beyond raids and trials and wiretaps and empire and war and guilt; to justify the tedium of mimeographing one more leaflet, working out one more position, suffering through one more insufferable meeting."[cccxli] It was a way to keep energy and commitment superficially high when members knew that their efforts were doomed. "To speak of The Revolution was automatically to acquire a pedigree, heroes, martyrs, allies, texts, and therefore anchorage."[cccxlii] It anchored the movement, but it required a commitment to a false reality and a disingenuous vision.

Gitlin also connects the movement's turn toward absolutism and militancy to an irrationality and loss of dialogue, both of which he identifies as reasons for the movement's later collapse in 1969. He writes, "To speak of The Revolution was to postpone vexing questions about socialism, anarchism, democracy. The Revolution was a solvent for strategic doubts, moral qualms, and internecine skirmishes…it was the collective willingness to suspend one's better judgment."[cccxliii] He claims, "To invoke The Revolution was, in short, to acquire prepackaged identity."[cccxliv] It was a way to act without having to think first—and, in Gitlin's mind, it continued to isolate the movement from the general public. He wrote that the militant members of SDS appeared condescending and self-righteous, "hinting that *they* were in possession of the philosopher's stone."[cccxlv] It was this misguided turn in the movement that, Gitlin argues, led to SDS's ultimate destruction.

So the no-longer-new Left trapped itself in a seamless loop: growing militancy, growing isolation, growing commitment to The Revolution, sloppier and more frantic attempts to imagine a revolutionary class, growing hatred among the competing factions with their competing imaginations, growing vulnerability to repression. Students for a Democratic Society, the movement's main organizational web, became its final battlefield. As the organization was pulled apart by cannibal factions, most of the remnants of the old New Left stood aside, demoralized, gazing in fascinated horror as sideshow theatrics became the movement's main act.[cccxlvi]

And so it is that Gitlin ends his book largely by placing the blame for the movement's failures on the moral absolutism and radicalism that he argues led to SDS's downfall. It was because of the absolutists and the radicals that the movement didn't push through the kind of lasting change it wanted—it was because of them that "the New Left failed to produce the political leaders one might have expected of a movement so vast."[cccxlvii] Gitlin writes that moral absolutism and an 'us' versus 'them' mentality did not translate into practical politics:

The millennial, all-or-nothing moods of the Sixties proved to be poor training for practical politics. The premium the movement placed on the glories and agonies of the pure existential will ill equipped many of us to slog away in coalitions in a society crisscrossed by divisions, a society not cleanly polarized along a single moral axis, a society not poised on the edge of radical change.[cccxlviii]

Change would have required patience more suited to actors with less moral urgency and who were more willing to compromise; it called for gradualists, not absolutists. Gitlin argues that the absolutist turn that largely followed the public's decision to side with the police in Chicago was not appropriate for a society that was not polarized, or ready for the radical change that these SDS members fought for—without compromise.

Arguments Against Moral Absolutism, From Within the SDS Movement

Gitlin retrospectively argues against moral absolutism and confrontational politics he associates with an all-or-nothing attitude, but there were SDS members who made similar

arguments at that time. There was the argument that SDS was isolating itself from potential, necessary coalitions—both outside of and within the organization. Karl North wrote in to *NLN* that a recent article "is absolutist and as such is typical of the kind of arguments hippies and politicos should stop throwing at each other. There are substantive issues between the two groups, but we'll never get down to them until we clear away from the hash."[cccxlix] North urged members to see that "some elements of both are requisite."[cccl] Absolutism prevented discussion, and this could be dangerous to a social movement that needed to establish common ground if it wanted to build the public support necessary to make its critique realized.

Eric Mann emphasized the dangers of absolutist isolation in a *NLN* article in March 1968. He wrote that while there were benefits to idealistic purity, absolutists, "By trying to avoid co-optation they often isolate themselves from struggles which the 'masses' think are important, such as large peace demonstrations, elections, and poverty programs."[cccli] Related to the concern that confrontational politics might scare off potential public supporters was a fear that SDS absolutists gave an impression, by being morally condescending, that they weren't even interested in garnering that support. Hayden warned that young McCarthy supporters "feel…severe criticism which often seems to come from the Left, from SDS people on campus…so they can quite easily be turned off by the Left."[ccclii] He asked that SDS members try to "respect the genuine experiences of the McCarthy students."[cccliii] It was important not to be morally condescending.

And there was evidence that some individuals were turned off by SDS's moral absolutism. One former member wrote to *NLN* that the reason he "is disillusioned with SDS is that SDS…is rapidly becoming a new fundamentalist religion…The world is divided into the saved and the damned. Anyone who does not meekly accept the 'correct line' is automatically an

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'agent' of Satan (the ruling class capitalist pig)."[cccliv] Doggett denounced what he saw as "this new fundamentalist Puritanism."[ccclv] Confrontational politics and delineating sides might be valuable contributions to democracy, but what if the lines are drawn in too tight—are too limiting and isolating?

Another Way to Look at the Failures of SDS

There are certainly negative aspects of moral absolutism, and not all moral absolutists would make the positive contributions to democracy that I have outlined—just as SDS showed that moral compromise might not be as positive a political approach as Walzer or even Dovi might imagine. Thankfully, I am not arguing that moral absolutists can only have a positive influence on a social movement and on democracy, or that all activists or citizens should strive to be absolutist; but I do disagree with the view that their influence is solely a negative one—or even that they are always less important to a country's democratic well-being that those who are willing to compromise.

I argue that Gitlin's historical analysis, like the political theory of Walzer, Hollis and others, discredits moral absolutists and political radicals too fully. It does not recognize enough their contributions to the New Left movement and it unfairly focuses on their influence on the movement at a specific place in time from which scholars and researchers are more likely to draw negative impressions. It does not acknowledge how moral absolutists were active and often contributed positively to SDS before the Chicago confrontation—and not only leading up to the organization's collapse—and it does not value the integral role of moral absolutists in an oppositional social movement's operations and structure. It places the blame too squarely on the shoulders of moral absolutists and political radicals. At times in the movement's history, I lean

toward Barber's claim that SDS members were not absolutist or radical enough; at other times, I feel that confrontation should have been followed by negotiation led by moral compromisers within the movement. But to discredit one or the other side completely misses the important contributions that each made to the social movement.

Similarly, it is too simple to dismiss the value of confrontational politics because, in the case of SDS, those politics did not lead to the kinds of changes that the organization wanted. The public chose the other side, but that does not mean that this would always be the result of a confrontational-style politics practiced by an oppositional social movement against the government. There are plenty of examples—recall the civil rights movement—of the public siding against the government and in favor of the opposition.

And even if the public did not side with SDS, was there really no value to the organization's decision to say and make clear through its actions, loudly and aggressively, that its members and much of the youth of America were unsatisfied with the current political system and its political actors? That they disagreed—*unreasonably*? That they wanted to hold politicians morally accountable for their actions? That they were willing to resist and possibly die for what they believed? If anything, Gitlin's recognition that society was not morally polarized or ready for the radical change that SDS wanted makes SDS's critique all the more valuable, even if it failed to get the requisite public support that would have made the movement a greater and more lasting success. For that difference with—opposition to—greater society and its willingness to compromise was what inspired the movement in the first place.

If the confrontations in Chicago and around the country, which, I have argued, were largely inspired and led by SDS absolutists and radicals, had convinced the public to side with SDS, I believe that it would still most likely be compromisers receiving the credit for the

movement's success—just as they were absolved of responsibility for its failures. Even then, we would skim over the contributions of the absolutists because absolutists are, at face value, undemocratic and scary. Their commitment to their cause can lead to violence or political extremism; they are not always ruled by a steady sense of calm or rational judgment. We value stability, but they often aim to topple our very foundations. They demand things from us that we aren't willing to give up, and we may feel threatened by them. They can't be swayed by a strong argument from the other side. We don't want to recognize the value of moral absolutists because absolutists are unreasonable, irrational—and, I argue, *vital* to a democratic polity that should wrestle with tough moral questions and have an active citizenship that directly challenges individuals and the system to be better.

Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I have argued for the benefits of confrontation and conflict in democracy—and I have tried to show that moral absolutists are essential to these important efforts. I believe that moral absolutists must often lead confrontational politics because an absolutist dedication to a cause is often necessary for individuals to make the sacrifices that come with directly opposing and challenging a more powerful force. This confrontation is necessary to delineate political stances and to have the public decide on one, often a step forward in expanding democracy to formerly oppressed groups and a recognition that there is and should be real, fundamental and absolute moral disagreements among citizens; to expose the system's undemocratic practices and hold accountable its leaders; and it is needed to build a social movement public support. In the chapter, I have challenged Gitlin and others who blame the failures of SDS on a militant and absolutist turn, instead pointing to historical factors that may have been responsible.

Chapter Four: A Review of Agonal Political Theory, Joel Olson and Abolitionist John Brown

I have argued thus far that the case of SDS shows that dirty-hands theory errs when it completely lauds moral compromisers and discounts moral absolutists, and that Dovi, by limiting absolutists' potentially positive power, does not extend her support for them far enough. In the previous chapter, I have tried to illustrate through SDS that confrontation and conflict are essential aspects of democracy and that the theorists I cite in chapter one overvalue consensus and compromise.

In this chapter I acknowledge that I am not alone in arguing for a more conflict-heavy view of democracy: agonal political theorists like Bonnie Honig also emphasize the importance of political disagreement. But as I show through Joel Olson's critique, agonal theorists also fail to sufficiently recognize the potential benefits of moral absolutists. They draw the line at those conflicts between individuals who do not respect each other or who refuse to compromise— therefore, they do not appreciate conflicts between moral absolutists and some other, uncompromising party.

While Olson appreciates moral absolutism and political extremism as political strategies, he does not value enough the actual absolutist actors. Part of the reason I wrote this thesis was because I was inspired by the bravery and courage of moral absolutists whose willingness to sacrifice their lives and privileges for a cause often seemed to be against their immediate, rational self-interest. And yet Olson speaks of moral absolutism as a political strategy that an individual might adopt or reject depending on whether he thinks it best serves his immediate political interests—he presents it as an unemotional, rational choice. He uses abolitionist Wendell Phillips as his case study but I argue that defending Phillips, who grounded his arguments in rational explanations, never advocated violence and was a staunch pacifist, is too easy a choice.

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I quickly review the history of radical abolitionist John Brown to show that Olson's choice was perhaps too safe—and misses why absolutists, through their often inexplicable passion and daring, both terrify and excite us. I choose Brown because he reveals the sometimes difficult, irrational, and emotional nature of moral absolutists that make them at certain times hard and at other times easy to defend. I bring Brown into the discussion because I argue that moral absolutists are often extraordinary *individuals*, and Brown's case is a well-researched one. I challenge Olson's view that being a moral absolutist is simply a means to an end—and not something more personal and exceptional.

Bonnie Honig, Agonal Theory, and an Argument for Conflict between Tolerant, Respectful Individuals

In *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, Bonnie Honig argues for an agonal political theory that is more accepting of conflict and political dissidence and recognizes their value to democracy. Honig contests the emphasis of many political theorists on consensus, and only consensus, which in her view leads them to ignore or silence political outsiders whose challenges and political disruptions are essential to crucial democratic efforts to keep "the contest of identity and difference going."[ccclvi] She fears that these theorists run the risk of closing the open forum for political disagreement and identity redefinition that marks and makes democracy great. She writes that her work is largely motivated by her "concern for the preservation of political space in late modern times."[ccclvii] Honig denounces what she sees as an assumption that flows from—and produces—this dangerous move toward closure: that whatever promotes social harmony is 'right' and 'fits' and that anything that threatens to disrupt it should be shut down or eliminated. She fears that this assumption could lead to a repressive state that seeks to exclude those individuals who do not 'fit', and a populace that, on an individual level, tries to conform all aspects of the self that do not match those of society's prescribed citizen.

Honig argues that political theory that fails to acknowledge the benefits of political disruption is undemocratic. She labels it 'virtue' theory and she writes, "The virtue theorists' assumption that it is possible and desirable to contain or expel the disruptions of politics has antidemocratic resonances, if by democracy one means a set of arrangements that perpetually generates popular (both local and global) political action as well as generating the practices that legitimate representative institutions."[ccclviii] Only emphasizing consensus means silencing 'others' and removing their voice from politics. Honig writes, "To render problematic the assumption of fittedness is not to say that these virtue theories of politics do not fit some of their subjects quite well; it is, instead, to focus on the depoliticizing effects of their *assumption* of fittedness."[ccclix] The outsider who does not 'fit' is not viewed as a political subject, and his potential political contributions are thus ignored or repressed.

In 'virtue' politics, the outsider is undemocratically excluded from politics. Honig writes of Michael Sandel and John Rawls, both of whom she assigns to the 'virtue' camp: "Each depoliticizes remainders and treats the other as an outside agitator who comes from somewhere else to disrupt an otherwise peaceful and stable set of arrangements." Honig not only argues that these outsiders should be valued politically, but also that they are not because they threaten the assumptions these theorists make. She writes, "Contra Rawls and Sandel, I argue that these remainders are potential sites of politics, and each has the power to disrupt and politicize established assumptions about agency, rationality, or the good, and that this is why each of these theorists is so anxious to exteriorize the remainders of his position rather than engage them."[ccclx] Unlike 'virtue' theorists, Honig believes that "in matters of identity, it is not possible to get it right—"[ccclxi] like Hannah Arendt, she suggests that "the mark of true politics…[is] a perpetual openness to the possibility of re-founding."[ccclxii] It is political outsiders who disrupt consensus

politics and who Honig believes push that re-founding by questioning current assumptions. It is because these outsiders challenge many of the assumptions on which 'virtue' theorists base their arguments and visions that Honig believes those same theorists aim to discount and exclude outsiders from democratic politics.

Honig similarly takes on Immanuel Kant for this effort to define perfectly and once and for all the good political subject—and to eliminate any alternative conception. She writes of Kant, "He sees no promise in the self's resistance to the ordering of subjectivity, no dimension of struggle that is worthy of affirmation."[ccclxiii] Honig, however, argues that "resistance to the requirements of moral virtue and subjectivity is cause not for mourning but for celebration."[ccclxiv] It is because of this resistance, Honig argues, that politics remain alive and active and institutions are held accountable. She comments, "Without these spaces of resistance and resistibility, there would be no action, no self-display, no self-enactment, no *virtù*; there would be only legal, judicial, bureaucratic administration or despotism, behavior, self-concealment, and virtue."[ccclxv] Without resistance, there wouldn't be any passion or progress in politics; the more likely result would be government corruption and repression.

Honig encourages conflict because she believes it fosters political openness. She worries that theorists like Kant, by demanding people act in a specific way, limit individuals' political and personal freedom. In this regard, Honig sides with Friedrich Nietzsche and Arendt: "Like Nietzsche, Arendt worries that the ordering of the self into a moral, well-behaved subject diminishes its propensity to act creatively and spontaneously."[ccclxvi] Honig values Nietzsche's unwillingness to submit to any one political theorist's idea of what is morally right and what is wrong. Along with Nietzsche and Arendt, Honig "admires the agon and seeks to protect it from closure, from domination by any one idea, truth, essence, individual, or institution."[ccclxvii] She

worries about certain 'virtue' theorists' insistence that people adhere to the theorists' conceptions and not contest them. Honig writes of this undemocratic, almost authoritarian presence in Rawls' work, which she ties to an intolerance for difference: "Throughout *A Theory of Justice*, the citizens' responses to the other in themselves and in other persons testify not to a sensitivity to or respect for others but to an impatience, anger, hostility, and incomprehension that silences or coerces those whose dissonance destabilizes the Rawlsian order."[ccclxviii] Theorists have an incentive to keep their assumptions unquestioned, but Honig argues that to work according to that incentive is to limit democratic possibilities and practices.

Contestation, Honig argues, forces the government to stay honest and democratic. She fears that the assumption of 'fittedness' and the closure that she argues accompanies such an assumption allows the state too much unchallenged authority. She writes that agonal or 'virtù' theories of politics, on the other hand, "reject, problematize, or resist any attempt to ground political authority unproblematically in a law of laws that is immune to contestation or amendment."[ccclxix] Honig believes that conceptions and laws should always be open to revision because we haven't—and never will—get them perfectly right. Agonal politics are superior to 'virtue' politics because they encourage contestation and political disagreement. Honig writes "that increases in justice will come with the proliferation, not the diminution, of political sites, with a politicizing rather than conciliatory response to the state's monopoly on the administration of justice."[ccclxx] Fully accepting the state as the only arbiter of justice gives it too much power and leads it toward corruption.

Opposition to the government then, is at times essential to maintaining a just democracy—and a crucial duty of being a citizen. Honig writes, "Democratic citizens must resist, not reconcile themselves to, the state's consolidations of its status as the locus of power as

well as its corresponding reduction of politics to administration and of citizenship to passive consumerism."[ccclxxi] And she recognizes that this opposition, though essential, will not always be easy: "The closures represented by law, responsibility, authority, the state, community, and sex/gender (to mention only a few) are not immobile…their sedimentations also have disempowering effects that are not easily overcome or challenged."[ccclxxii] The state and its institutions must at times be challenged and opposed, even when this task is difficult because the individuals standing in opposition are disempowered or depoliticized by the current system—whose undemocratic roots may run deep in society's fabric.

Honig's 'virtù' politics requires a dedication to contestation and resistance. She writes, "*virtù* theories of politics value—they do not try to soothe or efface—the undecidable other's disruptions of language, law, morality, and subjectivity because the other keeps the contest…going."[ccclxxiii] To make this happen, especially against difficult odds and powerful state actors and societal norms, requires commitment. Honig adds, "To keep the contest going requires a commitment to a politics of self-overcoming, a politics that contests closure."[ccclxxiv] It is not an easy task to resist powerful forces, but that does not make doing so less necessary.

Of course, Honig does not solely advocate political disruption and contestation, instead arguing for a political theory that recognizes the complementary benefits of consensus and contestation, of constancy and flux. She has a problem with political theorists who simply refuse to acknowledge the value of contestation, who believe that disruption and consensus cannot coexist, that the existence of one necessarily endangers the other. She lashes out at the "the oppositional structure of the virtue-*virtù* debate…[which] implies that there is a choice to be made between a politics of settlement and a politics of unsettlement, as if any politics could be one without the other."[ccclxxv] In her view, the two are complementary and each is required for

maintenance of the other. Honig is quick to point out that she is not for a system of chaos, or constant opposition; she writes, "To affirm the perpetuity of contest is not to celebrate a world without points of stabilization."[ccclxxvi] To defend contestation is not to devalue consensus; it is this very impulse reversed on the part of 'virtue' theorists that Honig decries.

Honig wants 'virtue' and '*virtù*' politics to facilitate and challenge each other. She believes that this debate opens political space for difference. She is for "a democratic politics of augmentation, which strives to maintain the friction between virtue and *virtù* for the sake of the political space engendered by their struggle and endangered by the victory of either impulse over the other."[ccclxxvii] She never wants one side to defeat the other. She quotes Max Weber's "Politics as a Vocation" and she supports his vision of an ethic of responsibility complementing an ethic of conviction, though she does not make note of, as I have in chapter one, Weber's apparent preference for the former ethic.

What is perhaps telling about Honig's vision of the productive political outsider is that in her formulation '*virtù*' politics more closely align with an ethic of responsibility and 'virtue' politics with an ethic of conviction. Honig writes that "Weber's 'Politics as a Vocation' describes two distinct ethics, an ethic of responsibility (which bears some resemblance to the *virtù* theory developed here) and an ethic of ultimate ends (which bears some resemblance to the virtue theory developed here)."[ccclxxviii] Her political outsider is not an absolutist but more of a compromiser; it is the absolute conception of 'fittedness' that the outsider seeks to disrupt. Honig does not argue in defense of the moral absolutist who challenges government and societal norms, then; she has a vision of a more tolerant, understanding and respectful political outsider who poses a challenge.

Honig, then, although she argues for a democracy that values conflict, does not advocate for absolutist political outsiders providing that conflict. Her outsider is a respectful one; she writes that as she envisions it, "a *virtù* politics goes beyond magnanimity to gratitude to the other."[ccclxxix] She wants to open political space, and she fears that an absolutist activist might close it. In a review of her book published in the *American Quarterly*, Lawrence Biskowski takes Honig to task for what he views as her unrealistically mild conception of antagonistic political actors.

> For distantly similar reasons, Honig's confidence in the magnanimity of agonistic actors is at the very least problematic. The kindness, generosity, and respect for difference that she hopes will characterize individuals in a society shaped by the spirit of agon and an aesthetic approach to identity-formation are certainly possible. So, too, are individuals with some rather less-savory qualities.[ccclxxx]

Honig wants conflict, but how far is she willing to go in her support of political disruptions and disagreements?

Olson's Defense of Fanaticism as a Political Strategy

Like me, Joel Olson makes an argument that goes further than Honig's because it seeks to acknowledge the benefits of oppositional political actors whose politics are extreme or absolutist—and, on the face of it, therefore, undemocratic. This is important because, as I have argued, the difficult oppositional actions that Honig supports often need to be led by absolutist political actors who are willing to make the necessary sacrifices and inspire through their own moral conviction activism in others. It is also important because absolutist actors are often vilified or dismissed and are rarely recognized as potentially contributing positively to democracy.

Olson makes clear that neither the 'deliberative' nor 'agonal' branches of democratic theory account for political extremist actors. He writes, "Despite an appreciation for the role of

conflict in politics, agonal democratic theory's approach to political conflict is quite similar to its purportedly conflict-averse rival."[ccclxxxi] Agonal politics argues for conflict, but it assumes that the conflict will not be particularly aggressive or threatening. According to Olson, both theories also assume that disagreements will not be over fundamental issues. Olson explains:

> That is, both models overwhelmingly focus on conflict that takes place among parties who share a common liberal ethical and political framework that provides the principles and rules within which legitimate political contest takes place. Contemporary democratic theory lacks an account of fanaticism because it largely ignores conflicts over the framework itself.[ccclxxxii]

Olson argues that the assumption that the framework is the correct one unfairly marginalizes and discounts political extremists whose challenges to the framework could, in his estimation, be of democratic value. He comments, "This narrow focus leads democratic theorists to assume that extremism is inherently antidemocratic…This assumption, however, presumes the inherent justice of the framework in question."[ccclxxxiii] In fact, Olson argues, as I do, that absolutist political actors can actually further democratic causes. He argues that in conflicts over the existing political and liberal framework, "zealotry can be a democratic tool if it rallies public opinion to expand the citizen body and its power. In struggles for hegemony between competing frameworks, zealotry can be as useful to radical democrats as it is to fundamentalists."[ccclxxxiv] Where citizens are empowered and their politics activated because of the political initiatives of absolutists or extremists, the role of the latter groups may be a democratic one.

Olson uses abolitionist Wendell Philips as an example of a positive fanatical political activist who through his actions helped improve and expand American democracy. Olson argues that it was Philips' absolutist approach that helped extend the democratic framework: "By drawing lines, repudiating compromise, and pressuring the political middle to choose between slaves and masters, Phillips…expanded American democracy beyond the framework of the

masters."[ccclxxxv] Olson writes that in situations in which individuals in opposition are fighting for democratic ideals against a power that refuses to consider their critique, an absolutist political strategy that aims to delineate sides and forces people to choose one can be not only effective, but also beneficial to that democracy.

Key to Olson's argument is his claim that there are times when the deliberative and agonal political models cannot provide a solution to disagreements that are fundamental and involve different conceptions of the best political framework. This occurs when there is a refusal to work toward a compromise by at least one of the two parties in opposition. He writes, "Some enemies cannot be turned into friends. When parties conflict over the very ethico-political framework within which debate takes place, they have reached the horizon of deliberation. The only remaining option is struggle."[ccclxxxvi] These are times when "when at least one party has no desire to make the compromises needed to construct a common framework."[ccclxxxvii] He continues:

> This is the realm of intractable conflict, in which the objective is not to build consensus or create 'friendly enemies' but to defeat one's opponent and to install one's framework as the 'common sense' of a society. In such a realm, the potential for fanaticism exists because it is precisely a strategy to establish a new hegemony by mobilizing friends against enemies through an irresolute refusal to compromise.[ccclxxxviii]

Olson writes about the potential benefits of an absolutist, 'us' versus 'them' political conception, and he argues that this strategy can help mobilize people to fight for your cause. He writes, "Fanaticism is the political mobilization of the refusal to compromise. It is an approach to politics that divides the world into friends and enemies in order to mobilize people in the service of a cause one is passionately committed to."[ccclxxxix] Here again we see someone argue for the potential benefits of delineating political sides, and this time, contrary to the history of SDS, Olson brings to light an example in which the strategy works in the absolutists' favor. Olson

writes, "Zealotry coalesces the forces in a conflict, defines its poles, makes the strongest possible case for one pole against the other, and pushes the moderate center to choose sides."[cccxc] In this view, people are either with or against you.

The case of Wendell Phillips shows the potential for absolutism as a political strategy. Olson talks at length about Phillips' efforts to draw strict lines between abolitionists and those in favor of slavery. Writes Olson, "Phillips does not talk to mend fences but to draw lines. In other words, *Phillips does not employ talk to moderate conflict but to increase political agitation in a struggle for hegemony*."[cccxci] Phillips' wanted to identify the other side as an enemy that was morally corrupt and needed to be defeated—not compromised with. "Phillips's goal is not to achieve consensus through deliberation or to turn enemies into adversaries but to foster two hostile camps."[cccxcii] The goal was to break the issue into binaries, a fight of good versus evil, and to build public support behind the 'good' side: "Abolitionist agitation crystallizes politics into freedom and slavery, right and wrong, salvation and sin, democracy and tyranny."[cccxciii]

Phillips' defense of John Brown's attack on Harpers Ferry is similar to arguments made by SDS members that once these lines were drawn, absolutist and militant action needed to make it clear that people really did have to take sides. The public had to know that the opposition was serious in its claims: it was 'us' or 'them' and activists were willing to back up their aggressive rhetoric. Olson writes, "Phillips did not [condemn it] because he saw Harpers Ferry as embodying the function of talk, which is not just deliberation or agonistic engagement but also agitation."[cccxciv] Absolutist and militant action was a way of mobilizing the public into making a choice once the sides were clearly drawn.

Phillips wanted to instill the abolitionist framework in place of the current one, and he insisted that Abraham Lincoln declare that he would make every effort to *force* the abolitionist

framework onto the South. He said, "Lincoln must not sit on the fence any longer. He must…identify his friends and his enemies, and act accordingly to defeat ''the South'' and install ''the North'' as the new national common sense."[cccxcv] This argument certainly seems similar to that made by members in the Black Power movement and absolutists and radicals in SDS.

And Olson takes the case of Wendell Phillips to show that this political strategy, for that is how he views absolutism, can be a successful—and democratic—one. He writes, "The fact that we are all abolitionists today confirms that there can be democratic potential in the fanatical encouragement of intractable conflict."[cccxcvi] Phillips' conceptualization of the issue of slavery as a conflict for which deliberation and debate would not suffice was adopted by enough Americans for a Civil War to be fought; and his side was strong enough to win and force its more inclusive, democratic framework onto parts of the country that had opposed it.

Like my own, a key aspect of Olson's defense of political extremists, then, is their assumed dedication to democratic practices and goals—it is when they wish to expand the democratic framework or identify how the current system is not meeting the standards of that framework that political fanatics may contribute positively to democracy. He only defends political extremism when it aims to make democracy better. Olson writes, "Zealotry contributes to democracy when it is put in the service of a more democratic common sense."[cccxcvii] He continues: "For this reason, democratic theorists should not automatically condemn it…[but] evaluate it according to the same criteria they use to assess other forms of political activity: does it expand the ability of ordinary people to participate in those affairs that affect their daily life?"[cccxcviii] And he makes clear that an absolutist stance, though it might lead to violent practices, need not always do so: "Laws prohibiting the use or threat of physical force exclude violent extremists, but not all extremists advocate violence."[cccxcix] Like Honig, he wants to

expand and open political space and he thinks that sometimes an absolutist political strategy, when its goals are democratic, is an effective and valuable way to do that.

Like Honig before him, Olson at the end of his piece makes clear that he is not always advocating for political disagreement, nor does he want to suggest that compromise is not often the better route of action. He acknowledges that "extremism is not always or even usually democratic, of course. Extremism certainly can be put toward violent and antidemocratic ends and often has, as the history of this short century already attests. Nor is this to deny the importance of compromise and moderation in democratic politics."[cd] His point is that absolutists should not be dismissed without careful consideration as to their democratic contributions. His argument is that "some fanatics may make genuine contributions to democratic practice, as I argue below, and thus their exclusion would be detrimental to democratic theory."[cdi] To discount the absolutist political strategy would limit democratic theory's explanatory value.

Similar to my approach with Dovi, Olson credits Honig and agonal theorists for recognizing that conflict can benefit democracy but criticizes them for not following their theories through to the end. He writes that despite their professed appreciation for disagreement, "agonistic democratic theories also place largely unacknowledged limits on political contestation."[cdii] As he sees it, such theories only explain disagreements between individuals who are, at the end of the day, still willing to compromise. He writes, "Agonism, however, involves conflict with an adversary with whom one struggles but respects and therefore does not seek to destroy…In other words, these agonal theories have much to say about adversaries but little to say about enemies proper."[cdiii] This failure to look at situations in which compromise is viewed as an impossibility by at least one of the parties does not acknowledge relations of power and how oppositional frameworks sometimes need to be fought over for one to be established as the

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norm. Olson comments, "[Agonal theorists] do important work in defending the constructive role of conflict in politics but they do not much consider hegemony or its tension with agonism."[cdiv] Sometimes deliberative and friendly antagonistic challenges cannot provide a solution to fundamental disagreements: this is something I have argued as well.

But the way Olson looks at absolutism is one area in which Olson and I part company: while I view moral absolutism as a reaction—political but also emotional, public but also private—of some to what they see as repressive social, political or economic forces, Olson is more detached from the concept of political fanaticism, solely viewing it as a specific type of political strategy. It makes sense then that he argues that political fanatics can be rational—he notes, "Phillips epitomizes an Enlightenment faith in the power of reason to triumph over coercion."[cdv] He thinks of absolutism as a rational choice taken by political actors to achieve their desired ends.

Seeing that some people fighting in oppositional social movements are morally absolute, I look at their political importance within those movements and with regard to the greater democracy; Olson looks at moral absolutism as a strategy chosen by individuals because they feel that it can best bring them political success. He writes, "Extremism is neither a vice nor a virtue but an approach to politics that emerges in times of profound social and political tension."[cdvi] In his mind, absolutism is a political tactic that leaders may choose to adopt if they think doing so would be advantageous; the implication is that they could drop this strategy if there is still time and they don't think it will be successful.

I believe that being morally absolute cannot only be a political calculation, because the willingness to sacrifice oneself that comes with and from such an uncompromising stance, especially when one stands in opposition to a more powerful political force, comes from

somewhere deeper and cannot just be discarded or adopted as it best fits a political actor. So when Olson argues that "zealotry is essentially a means rather than an end,"[cdvii] I would argue that he undersells the difficulty and complexity that is attached to taking a politically extremist position—that he views it as a decision, or a political calculation, when really the commitment runs deeper. He neglects to recognize adequately the extraordinary personal strength that is a prerequisite for an individual to take a morally absolutist stance against a more powerful foe. I argue that for someone to take up absolutism as a political strategy he must already have that commitment or willingness to commit, and that this does not come easy—that his absolutism must in some ways be an end before he can use it for political means.

It's Personal: On Conviction, John Brown and the Individual Moral Absolutist

It is often the life stories of moral absolutists who lead oppositional social movements with whose aim we agree that inspire us and make vivid the causes for which they were fighting. Whether we see them develop into the hardheaded leaders they become or remember them as particularly moralistic from a young age, there is a sense that they took the uncompromising stances they did because they felt that they *had* to—that they were morally compelled to do so. It is this kind of natural and unrelenting commitment that separates these individuals from followers and others outside the movement whose priorities either lie elsewhere or are not so firmly connected to the particular cause. It is their passion that inspires us—and we typically believe, contrary to Olson, that their dedication to a cause is not the result of sober political calculation, but rather something that even they might not understand—some force that imbues them with the moral urgency that people so rarely exhibit. It is often their irrationality, not their rationality, that inspires us, for it is seemingly irrational to give one's life to a cause, or to

renounce all of one's privilege. Their lives take on a certain mystique because we want to know how it is that they could reach such a high level of moral conviction.

Olson takes as his case Wendell Phillips, but a more challenging and potentially rewarding absolutist abolitionist to take as a case might be John Brown. Brown is more difficult to defend because he used violence in his fight against slavery, and because more than Phillips or other abolitionists, he sought to fully and completely adhere to his moral principles in his own life, which often made him appear irrational and isolating, and also placed him further outside and in opposition to the political and liberal framework that existed at the time. Brown's actions were often not very well thought-out, and he was less of an astute political activist than a man improbably and somewhat inexplicably committed to ridding the country of slavery—by whatever means necessary. It is important to look at an individual like John Brown because to only look at absolutism as a political strategy is to miss why absolutists inspire us; why they are such controversial figures; and why their critiques often gather so much attention, and their influence is felt so widely and for so long.

One thing that is known about John Brown is that he was absolutist in his convictions, which were based in Calvinist thought. David S. Reynolds makes this clear in his book *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*. Reynolds writes, "Both enemies and friends of John Brown, then, considered him a deep-dyed Puritan. They were right."[cdviii] Like his father, Brown believed that "God was absolutely sovereign, and humans were absolutely helpless in the face of God's power. There was no middle ground…God determined everything."[cdix] Like SDS members who saw that democratic principles were not being met and felt that they needed to act, Brown saw Christian principles violated and felt compelled to act. Reynolds writes that while at that time "shockingly few white

Christians admitted that blacks were included in the Golden Rule,"[cdx] Brown was unwilling to make a similar concession.

And yet because Brown would become so fervently committed to the anti-slavery cause, he would adopt violent tactics that were only questionably in line with his religious teachings—and the arguments of other abolitionists at the time, who preached a non-violent approach. According to Reynolds, "The other Abolitionists were, by and large, pacifists, and they would maintain their pacifism…John Brown began as a pacifist…[but] his antislavery convictions overwhelmed his pacifism."[cdxi] In his view, pacifism was a preference that would not suffice for a disagreement on which neither side was willing to compromise. Reynolds writes that the reason Brown "departed from the likes of Garrison and Emerson was his belief (and time proved him right) that voluntary liberation was unlikely to happen in America, since Southerners' devotion to their particular institution was steadily strengthening."[cdxii] In Brown's eyes, "No other problem…called for the use of arms."[cdxiii] Brown wanted to be a pacifist, but his moral conviction that slavery was a grave evil took precedence.

Brown was unlike other abolitionists in the degree to which he backed up his rhetoric with actions that affirmed his belief in racial equality. Reynolds writes, "In this cultural sea of racism, John Brown stands out of his utter lack of prejudice. This is not to say that he was the only nonracist white in North America…But Brown was the only one to both model his lifestyle and his plans for abolishing slavery on black culture."[cdxiv] Unlike many others, "John Brown put action behind his words."[cdxv] There is evidence that Brown truly treated blacks as his equals, and that other leading abolitionists did not. Reynolds writes that "most white Abolitionists of the day were racists who did not like working with blacks,"[cdxvi] and he notes that in 1831 William Lloyd Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society had only three blacks in the group's sixty-three-

person planning session. Brown on the other hand created an oppositional plan that depended on the rebellion and bravery of blacks.

Further, Brown made it clear that he was willing to, and ultimately would, make the ultimate sacrifice—his life—for the fight to end slavery, while many other abolitionists balked at sacrificing their privilege and aimed for a gradualist vision for change. Reynolds notes that individuals were inspired by his commitment, and in the end many "willingly joined him in the cause he was ready to die for."[cdxvii] Brown opposed the gradualism of other anti-slavery advocates, like William Seward, who, along with Abraham Lincoln, "looked forward to slavery's ultimate extinction, gradually and at some distant time—perhaps in five decades, he once said (Lincoln guessed a century)—but not through force."[cdxviii] Reynolds writes that while they were "committed to improving the social condition of blacks, these Republican leaders did not escape the racial prejudice prevalent in the area."[cdxix] But Brown was unwilling to postpone an issue that he felt carried such moral import: "Brown did not like to wait for events to push him. He pushed, and events followed."[cdxx] He felt that an evil as great as slavery should not be tolerated—for any amount of time.

Like other absolutists we have encountered, though more by example and action than most of them, Brown worked to delineate sides and make clear that it was his or theirs. Reynolds describes his polarizing image: "John Brown was Christ. John Brown was Satan. In the not distant future, the two views would come into violent collision."[cdxxi] Even in music reproductions, Brown was a controversial figure. Reynolds writes, "But Brown had stirred deep political passions…The divided opinions over Brown produced verse that was sharply contrasting in tone."[cdxxii] According to Reynolds, Brown moved the nation toward war. He writes, "If John Brown had driven the South to a secessionist fury, he had at the same time

carried the North toward unified action against slavery."[cdxxiii] Eventually, the North and South

would play out Brown's conception and labeling of them as uncompromising sides in the Civil

War.

In Reynolds' view, Brown provided an absolutist view that was necessary at a time when

moral compromise ruled. He writes, "In a larger sense there was a dire need for a self-reliant,

sincere individual utterly dedicated to a cause. Both sides of the slavery struggle had produced

craven compromisers…An alternative kind of person was needed."[cdxxiv] Brown saw a

government that was not meeting its promises to the people or following the commands of God,

and he felt that it was his duty to challenge it—directly. By attacking a federal arsenal at Harpers

Ferry, Brown, Reynolds claims, "was not only targeting slavery but also challenging the national

government."[cdxxv] Brown was not challenging the foundational principles of the government, but

rather the system's willingness to compromise on those very principles. According to Reynolds,

what Brown wanted was the "natural fulfillment of the ideal of equality announced in the

Declaration of Independence…what the American government really was, underneath the racism

and corruption that currently spoiled it."[cdxxvi] Reynolds writes, "Brown's goal was a democratic

society that assigned full rights to all, irrespective of religion, race, or gender."[cdxxvii] There had

been compromise in government where there should not have been.

Brown's critique was a moral one rooted in religious and democratic principles. Reynolds

describes Brown as a man who refused, under any circumstances, to sacrifice his morality. He

writes that Brown "seemed the embodiment of virtue. He was moral to the point of prissiness.

Redpath noted that no swearing or drinking was permitted in the camp."[cdxxviii] Brown's

seriousness often alienated and intimidated others, and as is the case with many other social

activists, it kept him away from his family for long stretches of time—ultimately, taking him

away from them for good. His absolutism, then, and his prioritization of the fight against slavery above all else, was not without its personal consequences.

It also led Brown to commit violent acts that were morally questionable. The Pottawatomie slaughter is the best example of such a case. Brown and his men slaughtered five pro-slavery men "on a negligible pretext, using a sneak attack when the enemy was defenseless, and with disregard for possible punishment."[cdxxix] Reynolds writes that the legacy of Brown's violence—some might calls his acts terrorism—have confused his legacy. He writes, "A key difficulty modern Americans have with Brown is that his goal—the abolition of slavery—was undeniably good, but his violent methods are hard to swallow."[cdxxx] In this way especially, Brown is a more complex case than that of Wendell Phillips.

Reynolds ultimately defends John Brown, largely because in his mind, although the tactics Brown used are not easy ones to accept, they would later be mirrored in the brutal Civil War that would follow Brown—a war that Reynolds argues was necessary to end slavery, and was less harmful than it would have been had it occurred later, without the push that Brown provided. Speaking of the failed Harpers Ferry raid, Reynolds writes, "The raid and its aftermath prefigured the Civil War in uncanny ways—it was almost the Civil War in microcosm."[cdxxxi] Reynolds points out that the War, which largely began as an effort to preserve the Union, eventually took on a more Abolitionist tone. He writes that "though Brown did not live to see the [Civil War], he embodied its spirit in advance,"[cdxxxii] and Reynolds goes on to compare the abolitionist stance that Lincoln would eventually take to the one that Brown had died preaching six years earlier.

Reynolds argues "that the war become more and more John Brown's war. It was largely because the North increasingly adopted Brown's aims and his tactics that it defeated the

South."[cdxxxiii] Southerners had historically been the ones to strike fear into Northerners hearts; it

had been Southern mobs that had ruthlessly murdered groups of antislavery activists. According

to Reynolds, "the historical record indicates that the proslavery side committed most acts of

violence."[cdxxxiv] Even though Brown's acts were violent, perhaps they were necessary to overturn

a system that others had a strong interest in maintaining—and were willing to fight hard to keep.

In the end, Reynolds argues that "Brown emerges as a positive agent for change, because he

forced a war that would have come anyway but could only have been worse than it was."[cdxxxv]

The tactics may have been harsh, but also necessary. In recognizing that Brown was violent but

in the end praising his contribution to democracy, Reynolds goes further than Olson: sometimes

violence may be necessary to expand the democratic framework.

Reynolds ends the piece with a defense of Brown and what he sees as his necessary

absolutist critique of society, and one that we should make room for in the future.

> America has become a vast network of institutions that tend to stifle vigorous
> challenges from individuals. Such challenges are needed if the nation is to remain
> healthy. There must be modern Americans who identify with the oppressed with
> such passion that they are willing to die for them, as Brown did. And America
> must be large enough to allow for meaningful protest, instead of remaining
> satisfied with patriotic bromides and a capitalist mass culture that fosters
> homogenized complacency. Unless America is ready at every moment to see its
> own failings, it is one step closer to becoming the tyrannical monster is pretends
> not to be…What would have happened if Brown had not violently disrupted the
> racist juggernaut that was America?[cdxxxvi]

Another question that might be valuable to ask is why did Brown not only hold views that

were extremely progressive for his time, but also why did he hold them absolutely? It does not

appear that Brown solely chose to be absolutist because, as Olson suggests he might, he thought

it could be an effective political strategy. Part of the reason is likely related to his Calvinist

upbringing and strong religious faith, but another reason is that Brown simply felt compelled to

sacrifice his life for the antislavery cause—he took slavery and America's failure to live up to its

own and God's principles as a *personal* affront. Reynolds' terms Brown's fight a "personal battle against slavery."[cdxxxvii] It was an irrational, personal effort to end slavery that first inspired Brown and later so many others to join Brown's fight.

Conflict and Conviction

Honig and other agonal theorists do not acknowledge the potentially positive influence of moral absolutists on democracy because, as Olson points out, they do not include conflicts in which the disagreements are greater in scale and more aggressive in nature—they do not include room for absolutists, but rather individuals who hold more respect for their political opponents and the system in which they operate. But Olson also does not fully capture moral absolutists, only viewing absolutism as a political strategy and not as something more fundamental. It is because absolutists take things personally and act emotionally and irrationally that they can be so inspiring, divisive, and scary—understanding and valuing them as extraordinary individuals is essential to seeing why they are important to us, and important to democracy.

Conclusion: Wrapping Up Thoughts, Considering Which Perspective is Needed When, and Tying the Discussion into a Larger One on Torture, with Real Consequences for Today's Political Decisions

As I have shown through a historical look at SDS, the dirty-hands debate errs when its adherents only extol the virtues of moral compromisers as political actors. Moral absolutists, when their political critique and moral anger is grounded in a democratic belief that individual rights are being violated and must no longer be compromised on, can make possible significant compromise because they both make clear that there are very different and irreconcilable stances and because they aim to hold dirty-hands politicians accountable for their actions. That is, they ensure that there is something to compromise *on* and that the individual who does so does not take compromising his morals lightly. Although they cannot make the dirty-hands politician feel guilt, absolutists can make it clear to him that he will have to stand by and discuss whatever decision he does make—they can make the decision to sacrifice his morals a more difficult one. Moral absolutists of the vein I have described often reintroduce morality into places where it has dulled, and can remind us that we are not living in accordance with our democratic and moral principles.

Dovi recognizes that absolutists can benefit democracy, but she does not recognize adequately that to make their critique heard and felt by dirty-hands politicians and the public, absolutists will at times have—and may be inclined—to take a powerful, directly antagonistic stand against those in power and with whom they so fervently disagree. Those in power are often not, as Dovi imagines, voluntarily willing to consider others' suggestions and complaints. Like Honig and other agonal political theorists, Dovi acknowledges that not only compromise but also conflict can improve democracy, but both groups stop short of appreciating conflicts between two powerful sides that refuse to compromise on issues and do not respect each other—leaving it

to the public to make a choice. Olson does appreciate such conflicts, but he does not fully appreciate the absolutist actors who spearhead them; Olson instead views absolutism as a political strategy that an individual chooses to adopt or reject based on his dry, rational evaluation of what will bring him the most political success.

But to view absolutism in this light is to miss why absolutists are often so inspiring or terrifying to a public more inclined toward compromise; damages their critique by trying to fit absolutism into a political model that emphasizes rationality and distance from emotion; and undersells the absolutist individuals, whose willingness to sacrifice themselves for a cause typically not in their immediate interest is viewed as calculated and not brave or the result of moral conviction of a strength never attained by most people. It is to miss their value as extraordinary individuals. Absolutists are interesting to us because they often appear *irrational*, *emotional*, and because they explain their actions as something that they simply *knew* they had, or were compelled to do; they often struggle to provide a rational explanation that goes beyond restating their conviction. It is their passion that is so essential in leading an oppositional social movement that faces tall odds, toward confrontations that require real sacrifices that, in the case of SDS, could have potentially led to rewarding negotiations between the liberal 'enemy' and compromisers within the SDS organization.

SDS perhaps could have benefitted from more absolutist commitment within its ranks; often it appeared that members were not willing to live up to their own critique and the sacrifice of gender, race, and class privileges that doing so would have entailed. And yet I agree with Gitlin when he says that SDS and its critique of morally compromising politicians had a lasting, positive influence on American democracy. It showed politicians that they could be held publically accountable for their decisions, and it reminded them that morality should both be

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present and not easily compromised in those decisions. SDS and New Left efforts ultimately widened the political spectrum to accept and consider more alternatives than those to which a consensus-driven political center had been open. SDS delineated lines between 'us' and a liberal establishment they separated as a completely unlike 'them'. Although the public would ultimately choose the other side, drawing those lines and making clear that there were strongly-held differences between the two benefitted democracy, which is as much about living with and sometimes deciding between difference as it is about compromise and consensus.

Why This Perspective, Now?

Like other authors we have looked at, then, I do not attempt to argue that compromise and consensus are not very necessary and important aspects of democracy, but rather that there should also be room in political theory for oppositional moral absolutists whose moral impetus comes from a personal reaction to what they perceive as a failure of the country to live up to its democratic principles and promises. Olson is right to recognize that political extremism, as I noted in the last chapter, often "emerges in times of profound social and political tension."[cdxxxviii] Often it is moral absolutists whose moral conviction and dedication to their cause must move democracy forward and extend its privileges, even if their tactics, potentially violent and based on the forces they are up against, appear undemocratic.

But if this is not always the case, it follows logically that at other times the perspective and attitude that a democracy needs is not one of moral absolutism and conflict, but rather moral compromise and consensus. One time that might call for the latter attitude is the moment following a culminating confrontation between oppositional moral absolutists and the politicians in power—after the sides have been made clear, and the public has chosen one of them,

assuming it has not, as was the case with the Civil War, split itself among the two parties and decided to settle the issue in a protracted war. In this view, the decision of many SDS members to lay down their weapons and accept the public's decision following the Democratic National Convention confrontation might be seen in a positive light, and not as a signal that they had given up or lacked moral conviction. It might be seen as parallel to the first American presidential election in which power was exchanged from one political party to the other, which Thomas Jefferson would hail as a "bloodless revolution."[cdxxxix] In this sense, even absolutists, while they wouldn't have to compromise on their morals, might have to recognize, as a democratic gesture, that the progress for which they are calling may have to arrive at a later date, when the public can be won over to their side.

Right now, however, there is little cause for concern that the attitude of prominent political theorists—even agonal ones—leans too heavily toward conflict and absolutism. As Shugarman notes, dirty-hands theory promotes a political system in which political decisions are made by individuals at elite levels who do not feel as if they need to explain their actions to the public—there is no accountability or democratic dialogue between leader and people. The moral dilemma is a private one for the political actor, who assumes both that he is making the right decision and that the people want him to make it. The theory explicitly defends antidemocratic and extralegal practices, from rigging an election to going back on campaign promises made to the general public. It is in this particular political theory context that I argue for moral absolutists who might hold these politicians accountable; refuse to compromise on important democratic principles; and do so by challenging them directly and at times selflessly, as only individuals completely committed to a cause can do, and as might be necessary in a fight against a more powerful foe.

<u>The Torture Debate</u>

The push and pull between dirty-hands theory and moral absolutism is in some respect an applied case of a larger debate between consequentialism and deontology, though it does not fit the parameters of that debate exactly.[cdxl] Narrowing one's focus and applying general theory to certain, more specific circumstances reflects on the greater debate's points and relevance; it also shows that the questions I have engaged in this thesis have been and are being discussed elsewhere and are of some practical import. In particular, they have been discussed relatively recently as the issue of how the United States should interrogate suspected terrorists has become an area of national interest and concern.

In a collection of essays on torture, the issues and arguments that have come up in this thesis find frequent expression. Central to the debate on torture, a practice that most of the writers consider to be in violation of democratic principles, is first whether or not torture is inevitable in the War on Terror; and secondly, if it is, if that means we should accept it as a reality and try to develop ways to legalize or evaluate the justice of its use in specific situations, or if we should still view it as absolutely wrong and unacceptable in all instances. Walzer assumes that politics are and will always be dirty; since he wants some moral men to be in politics, then, he argues that they must be willing to sacrifice their personal morals both to get into office and to make decisions once they've been elected—but to feel guilty about having done so. If the politician is personally against torture, he must still give the order to torture if it is the utilitarian choice to be made.

But many writers challenge Walzer and others who are willing to compromise on democratic and moral principles—and, as I have already noted Shugarman argues, in the process make it appear that violating these principles is not such a significant transgression. In an essay

that takes aim at the arguments of Alan Dershowitz,[cdxli] Elaine Scarry insists that there should be an absolute ban on torture. Just because something is going on that is wrong does not mean we should excuse it. She writes, "That one might *have to do* something someday that is wrong does not mean that the act has ceased to be 'wrong' or 'punishable.'"[cdxlii] In addition, she takes aim at Walzer's assumption that the political actor knows the right utilitarian action: "What instead makes the ticking bomb scenario improbable is the notion that in a world where knowledge is ordinarily so imperfect, we are suddenly granted the omniscience to know that the person in front of us holds this crucial information about the bomb's whereabouts."[cdxliii] Moral compromises seem more questionable when they are not definitively made for the greater good, a fact to which SDS protestors would attest regarding the Vietnam War.

While Walzer might respond that he is not, as Dershowitz proposes, saying that rigging an election or torturing a suspect should be legalized, I would argue that Scarry's criticism still largely holds for Walzer. Walzer, by suggesting that the moral politician is one who is willing to commit those acts, endorses the antidemocratic practices and ultimately makes it less likely that dirty-hands politicians will, as Walzer wants them to, weigh heavily transgressing their morals. Scarry insightfully writes that providing a defense of torture "eliminates the felt-aversiveness to cruelty that acts as a way to test one's level of conviction."[cdxliv] Walzer's dirty-hands theory depends upon the politician struggling through a moral dilemma and feeling guiltily about having broken his personal morals, but Walzer does not acknowledge how explicitly accepting that moral compromises will have to be made makes that dilemma and deliberation process less meaningful and productive.

Andrew Sullivan argues that there are some principles on which we should never compromise. Sullivan is not alone when he argues that "torture, in any form and in any

circumstances, is…antithetical to the most basic principles for which the United States stands."[cdxlv] His answer to the issue of torture, then, is simple: "The only way to control torture is to ban it outright. Everywhere."[cdxlvi] Sullivan questions our real commitment to democratic principles and ideals if we are willing to accept their violation: "If we abandon our ideals in the face of adversity and aggression, then those ideals were never really in our possession."[cdxlvii] Perhaps what is rational and easy is not the right choice.

Richard Weisberg goes so far as to compare lawyers who defend torture to those who in Vichy, France rationalized the racism of the Nazis and helped create and enforce racist practices there. With regard to the ticking bomb scenario, Weisberg does not ask for a thoughtful rational argument as to whether torture should be permitted or not, but a straightforward, absolutist one; he writes, "It is the complex rationalizers who wind up being more naïve than those who speak strictly, directly, and simply against injustice."[cdxlviii] Weisberg boldly claims this oppositional absolutist stance is the brave one; he argues that those who do not make it lack "the will to mount a [anti-Vichy lawyer who protested the government's racism, Jacques] Maury-style protest."[cdxlix] Sometimes, Weisberg insists, we should be willing to listen to those who stand in opposition and declare, bravely and in simple terms, that they will not compromise their morals to better match those of the majority, or to better accommodate any supposed political reality—that they will not, never, under any circumstances, betray their personal morals. He might be on to something.

Cover Page

[i] "Don't Move Or We'll Lose Our Political Stability," *SDS New Left Notes*. Vol. 3, No. 17 (May 13, 1968), 3.

Preface

[ii] Kozol is talking about K-12 education, but since I largely felt that political radicals were excluded from much of my college education, I adapted his critique where I saw fit.

Introduction

[iii] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*. Touchstone Books; Revised Edition (October, 1990), 27.

[iv] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 28.

[v] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 97.

[vi] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 97.

[vii] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 99.

[viii] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 99.

[ix] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 99.

[x] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 104.

[xi] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 105.

[xii] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 105.

[xiii] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 32.

[xiv] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 33.

[xv] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night is Dark and I Am Far From Home*, 33.

[xvi] Cathy Wilkerson, "We Move On The Draft—Part One: How To Develop Program," *SDS New Left Notes*. Vol. 3, No. 9 (March 11, 1968), 2.

[xvii] Eric Mann, "Appraisal & Perspectives-I," *New Left Notes*. Vol. 3, No. 8 (March 4, 1968), 4.

[xviii] Eric Mann, "Appraisal & Perspectives-I," 4.

[xix] Eric Mann, "Appraisal & Perspectives-I," 4.

Chapter One

[xx] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 2. (Winter, 1973), pp. 160-180, 160.

[xxi] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 160.

[xxii] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 161.

[xxiii] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 161.

[xxiv] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 162.

[xxv] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 162.

[xxvi] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 160.

[xxvii] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands."

[xxviii] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 168.

[xxix] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 166. His emphasis.

[xxx] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 164.

[xxxi] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 167.

[xxxii] Michael Walzer, "The Problem of Dirty Hands," 167. In the example, the politician visits his nation's colony's capital. He is in favor of decolonization, and bears no responsibility for a colonial war he has been unfortunate enough to inherit.

[xxxiii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," *Constellations,* Vol. 12, No. 1. (2005), pp. 130-146, 140.

[xxxiv] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 140.

[xxxv] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 140.

[xxxvi] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 140.

[xxxvii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 141.

[xxxviii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 141.

[xxxix] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 141.

[xl] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 140.

[xli] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*. Cambridge University Press (June 24, 1994), 360.

[xlii] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*, 360.

[xliii] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*, 368.

[xliv] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*, 360.

[xlv] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*, 369.

[xlvi] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*, 358.

[xlvii] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*, 358.

[xlviii] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*, 358.

[xlix] Martin Hollis, "Dirty Hands," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 12, No. 4. (Oct., 1982), pp. 385-398, 390.

[l] Martin Hollis, "Dirty Hands," 390.

[li] Martin Hollis, "Dirty Hands," 390.

[lii] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*, 358.

[liii] Martin Hollis, "Dirty Hands," 390.

[liv] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 129.

[lv] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 137.

[lvi] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 129.

[lvii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 132.

[lviii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 133.

[lix] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 142.

[lx] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 141.

[lxi] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 129.

[lxii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 129.

[lxiii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 129.

[lxiv] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 135.

[lxv] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 133.

[lxvi] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 135.

[lxvii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 134.

[lxviii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 133.

[lxix] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 141.

[lxx] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 141.

[lxxi] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 139-40.

[lxxii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 136.

[lxxiii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 136.

[lxxiv] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 136.

[lxxv] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 136.

[lxxvi] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 136.

[lxxvii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 132.

[lxxviii] Suzanne Dovi, "Guilt and the Problem of Dirty Hands," 133.

[lxxix] Max Weber, *Weber: Political Writings*, 368.

[lxxx] I define a directly antagonistic relationship as one in which one side aims to eliminate the other, or the foundation on which it rests; it requires two uncompromising sides in full opposition, each trying to sever the other's stake to legitimacy.

[lxxxi] David Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" *Cruelty and Deception: The Controversy Over Dirty Hands in Politics*, 244.

[lxxxii] David Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" 244-5.

[lxxxiii] David Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" 239.

[lxxxiv] David Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" 233.

[lxxxv] David Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" 245.

[lxxxvi] David Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" 230.

[lxxxvii] David Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" 230.

[lxxxviii] David Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" 236.

[lxxxix] David Shugarman, "Democratic Dirty Hands?" 236.

Chapter Two

[xc] Although Walzer speaks specifically of individual, elected politicians for most of his piece, he begins the move toward considering political *actors*, who may or may not be within the system, toward its end (Dovi extends this move to consider the greater political arena, and I will do the same). He does this when he suggests that the terrorists in Albert Camus' *Just Assassins*, whose aim is to assassinate the Grand Duke, might be considered dirty-hands actors.

[xci] If we cannot definitely identify these politicians as Walzer-approved—which may be a problem with his theory, for there is no way of confirming whether a politician really feels guilty or not, but all politicians who face difficult decisions like the ones Walzer lays out can use the dirty-hands theory as their defense—we can at least recognize that the attacks made by SDS members against entrenched politicians could apply to Walzer's politicians. It has been suggested, however, that JFK is exactly who Walzer had in mind when he wrote his dirty-hands piece. Specifically, Walzer's defense of the politician who pays off the ward boss to win an election has been cited as a potential signal of this connection. Shugarman asks in "Democratic Dirty Hands?": "Is he hypothetical? Jack Kennedy apparently did make deals with the mafia, as well as with shady ward bosses in Illinois to win Chicago, and the state in 1960" (239).

[xcii] Port Huron Statement. <http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/huron.html>, Accessed February 27, 2012.

[xciii] Port Huron Statement. <http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/huron.html>

[xciv] Port Huron Statement. <http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/huron.html>

[xcv] Port Huron Statement. <http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/huron.html>

[xcvi] Port Huron Statement. <http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/huron.html>

[xcvii] Port Huron Statement. <http://www.h-net.org/~hst306/documents/huron.html>

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Chapter Three

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[ccclix] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 5.

[ccclx] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 10.

[ccclxi] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 10.

[ccclxii] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 116.

[ccclxiii] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 39.

[ccclxiv] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 39.

[ccclxv] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 39.

[ccclxvi] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 76.

[ccclxvii] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 116.

[ccclxviii] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 161.

[ccclxix] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 116.

[ccclxx] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 158.

[ccclxxi] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 13.

[ccclxxii] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 209-10.

[ccclxxiii] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 12.

[ccclxxiv] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 209.

[ccclxxv] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 13.

[ccclxxvi] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 15.

[ccclxxvii] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 14.

[ccclxxviii] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 205.

[ccclxxix] Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics*, 12.

[ccclxxx] Lawrence J. Biskowki, "Recovering the Political: Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics," *American Quarterly*. Vol. 48, No. 4 (Dec., 1996), pp. 700-707, 706.

[ccclxxxi] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," *Journal of Politics*. Vol. 71, No.1 (Jan., 2009), pp. 82-95, 82.

[ccclxxxii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 82.

[ccclxxxiii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 82.

[ccclxxxiv] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 82.

[ccclxxxv] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 83.

[ccclxxxvi] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 90.

[ccclxxxvii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 90.

[ccclxxxviii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 94.

[ccclxxxix] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 83.

[cccxc] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 93.

[cccxci] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 90.

[cccxcii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 91.

[cccxciii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 92.

[cccxciv] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 91.

[cccxcv] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 91.

[cccxcvi] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 83.

[cccxcvii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 94.

[cccxcviii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 94.

[cccxcix] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 85.

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[cdi] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 85.

[cdii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 87.

[cdiii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 88.

[cdiv] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 89.

[cdv] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 90.

[cdvi] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 94.

[cdvii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 91.

[cdviii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*. Vintage (November 14, 2006), 19.

[cdix] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 25.

[cdx] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 24.

[cdxi] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 34.

[cdxii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 55.

[cdxiii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 503.

[cdxiv] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 118.

[cdxv] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 121.

[cdxvi] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 255.

[cdxvii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 246.

[cdxviii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 272.

[cdxix] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 272.

[cdxx] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 275.

[cdxxi] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 369.

[cdxxii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 454.

[cdxxiii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 437.

[cdxxiv] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 206.

[cdxxv] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 112.

[cdxxvi] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 263.

[cdxxvii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 503.

[cdxxviii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 184.

[cdxxix] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 164.

[cdxxx] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 499.

[cdxxxi] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 309.

[cdxxxii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 95.

[cdxxxiii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 470.

[cdxxxiv] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 163.

[cdxxxv] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 443.

[cdxxxvi] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 505.

[cdxxxvii] David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, 470.

Conclusion

[cdxxxviii] Joel Olson, "Friends and Enemies, Slaves and Masters: Fanaticism, Wendell Phillips, and the Limits of Democratic Theory," 94.

[cdxxxix] "Thomas Jefferson: President of the United States."
<http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/resources/profile/264/Thomas-Jefferson-President-of-the-United-States/ >.
Accessed March 23, 2012.

[cdxl] Walzer does not identify the dirty-hands politician as a strict utilitarian, instead making his feel guilt for transgressing his personal morals for a utilitarian good; I do not consider all absolutists, but rather ones in opposition and holding democratic ideals.

[cdxli] Although the argument is addressed to Dershowitz, I have applied it to Walzer where I feel it is appropriate.

[cdxlii] Elaine Scarry, "Five Errors in the Reasoning of Alan Dershowitz," in *Torture: A Collection* (Ed: Sanford Levinson). Oxford University Press, USA (August 10, 2006), 282.

[cdxliii] Elaine Scarry, "Five Errors in the Reasoning of Alan Dershowitz," 284.

[cdxliv] Elaine Scarry, "Five Errors in the Reasoning of Alan Dershowitz," 285.

[cdxlv] Andrew Sullivan, "The Abolition of Torture," in *Torture: A Collection*, 318.

[cdxlvi] Andrew Sullivan, "The Abolition of Torture," 324.

[cdxlvii] Andrew Sullivan, "The Abolition of Torture," 327.

[cdxlviii] Richard H. Weisberg, "Loose Professionalism, or Why Lawyers Take the Lead on Torture," in *Torture: A Collection*, 304.

[cdxlix] Richard H. Weisberg, "Loose Professionalism, or Why Lawyers Take the Lead on Torture," 303.