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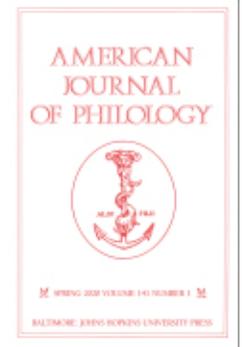
## Toward a Connected Classics Profession

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# TOWARD A CONNECTED CLASSICS PROFESSION

DANIELLE ALLEN



## WHAT WE NEED: A CONNECTED SOCIETY

IN AN IMPORTANT POSTHUMOUS ESSAY, “A Testament of Hope,” Martin Luther King, Jr., exhorted readers to lift their sights beyond the legal successes of the Civil Rights movement to a broader effort to bring about “changes in the structure of society.” He wrote:

Justice for black people will not flow into society merely from court decisions nor from fountains of political oratory. Nor will a few token changes quell all the tempestuous yearnings of millions of disadvantaged black people. White America must recognize that justice for black people cannot be achieved without radical changes in the structure of our society. The comfortable, the entrenched, the privileged cannot continue to tremble at the prospect of change in the status quo.

While King focused in several of his late writings on “the restructuring of the whole of American society,” exegetes have mostly focused on what he had to say in other essays about restructuring of the economy away from capitalism. But in “A Testament of Hope” he focused not on the economy but more broadly on restructuring civil society. He wrote: “Integration is meaningless without the sharing of power. When I speak of integration, I don’t mean a romantic mixing of colors, I mean a real sharing of power and responsibility. We will eventually achieve this, but it is going to be much more difficult for us than for any other minority.”

Where do co-residents of a polity share power and responsibility? In political institutions, yes, but not only there. Co-residents may share power in all the organizations—whether public or private, non-profit or commercial—that constitute civil society. The important if non-glamorous message of “A Testament of Hope” is that the long, hard slog of the Civil Rights movement will entail achieving organizational re-design throughout the whole of civil society. The work will have to embrace schools, colleges and universities, academic disciplines and professional societies, businesses and cultural organizations, and on and

on. Civil Rights isn't something that happens "over there" in Congress, the Supreme Court, or state assemblies; it happens here, and here, and here, and everywhere.

Indeed, it is obvious that there is work in front of us. The U.S. is living through a major demographic transition that will upend our earlier approaches to thinking about identity, community, and social relations.<sup>1</sup> The question of whether by, say, 2040, we will indeed live in an egalitarian country where no particular ethnic group is in the majority and where such inequalities as persist do not track ethnic or racial lines, depends on choices we make now.<sup>2</sup> If we make the wrong choices, we may find that a black/non-black binary has re-asserted itself and that racial privilege is as strong as ever. Yet the present demographic opening offers an opportunity to renew and even perhaps make good on this country's original, if hypocritical, egalitarian commitments and on its modern embrace of them alongside the Civil Rights movement. Many would say that in the face of rapid demographic change what we need to work is the generation of social cohesion. I think we would be better off focusing on equality and power-sharing.

Why focus on equality to define our social goals? Democracies are built on the twin ideals of liberty and equality. Up until the early 19th century, and in the period of the American founding, these ideals were understood to be mutually reinforcing, not in tension with one another. Political contestation following the rise of communism and during the Cold War, however, collapsed the concept of equality into "economic equality," and generated a conventional view that liberty and equality are in tension with one another.<sup>3</sup> But a recently growing body of work in political philosophy now seeks again to understand all of the different types of equality—moral, social, political, and economic—and to understand the relations among them. This body of work focuses on the centrality of political equality, or egalitarian empowerment, to human flourishing.<sup>4</sup> This line of work prioritizes democracy, as the only possible route to justice, rather than expecting that philosophers can close

<sup>1</sup>Sugrue 2016.

<sup>2</sup>This is a point underscored by Sugrue 2016, 70: "The color of America will certainly change [by 2040], but the meaning of race and ethnicity in the future depends to a great extent on policy decisions today."

<sup>3</sup>Allen 2014c.

<sup>4</sup>Representatives of this approach include Elizabeth Anderson, Amartya Sen, Philip Pettit, Josiah Ober, and myself. For an articulation of these commitments, see Allen 2014a; 2014b; Allen and Light 2015, who give a brief genealogy of this view and bibliography.

the question of the content of justice. The prioritization of democracy, and of political participation and empowerment as a necessary part of a flourishing life, establishes political equality—i.e., power sharing—as a fundamental feature of a just democracy. Just social relations in democracies characterized by demographic diversity will be egalitarian. What we should seek as a core democratic aspiration is not social cohesion but egalitarianism, King’s concept of power-sharing.

In the U.S. our thinking about democratic social relations was governed, in the 20th century, first by ideals of assimilation and integration, and then by a competing ideal of multiculturalism. Here, I argue that we should replace these with an ideal of “social connectedness.” As an ideal, social connectedness denotes a society where bridging ties, across lines of difference, are formed at a high rate and where individuals themselves frequently participate in such bridging ties. I will describe this ideal in more detail further on, and explain its connection to egalitarianism and, in particular, political equality; but I note here that my development of this ideal would not have occurred without intellectual resources from classics, in particular Josiah Ober’s important work on Athenian democracy. It’s only right that ideas born out of classical scholarship return to the discipline to offer assistance as members of the profession think about the future of the discipline.

In what follows, then, I will try to articulate the goals of integration understood as power sharing. The vocabulary in which I describe what we are after is a language of connection and the need to build an egalitarian, connected society. This vocabulary renovates the concept of integration for 21st-century use by dispensing with its early dependence on an assimilationist paradigm. Having laid out a set of aspirations, I will make some suggestions for how the profession of classics might fold these aspirations into its practices. I offer the suggestions as not a roadmap but a conversation starter intended to prompt thought, experimentation, and innovation.

### OLDER IDEALS: ASSIMILATION, INTEGRATION, AND MULTICULTURALISM

The ideal of social connectedness is an answer to the question of how to achieve a healthy, egalitarian, and democratic society in a context of great diversity. It will therefore be important to be explicit about the conceptual challenges posed by the idea of “diversity.” These are best seen by scrutinizing specific institutional efforts to wrestle with the concept,

but even before undertaking such scrutiny, we will find it useful to look back in history at our earlier ideals, to remind ourselves how earlier generations deployed the concepts of assimilation, integration, and identity, in attempts to answer questions similar to our own. Although these earlier ideals have long been discredited in scholarly circles, they easily re-emerge in lay conversations as individuals working inside of particular organizations seek to grapple with the topic of how to scaffold healthy social relations in conditions of diversity. Hence, it is worth being clear about their content and consequences.

First, for assimilation. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a “common schools” movement spread across the U.S., broadening the reach of public schooling and by 1918 achieving compulsory education in all 48 states then in the union.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of this movement was not, as we might now imagine, to increase the population’s level of educational attainment but to spread Americanization in the face of staggeringly high rates of immigration. The image of the “melting pot”—an America in which ethnic differences would be smelted and fused into an identifiably “American” synthesis—dates to 1908 and expressed a powerful ideal of assimilation.<sup>6</sup> As formal systems of Jim Crow segregation were dismantled in the 1950s and 60s, the goal of achieving healthy social relations took on the added dimension of the need to integrate across race lines. These two ideas—integration and assimilation—defined discussions of social relations from early in the 20th century through the early phase of the civil rights movement. The authority of these ideals waned in the late 20th century, but even as late as 1992 the eminent historian, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., could still organize his analysis of the prospects for U.S. social life around them, and his treatment provides a good example of the core problem with these ideals. He wrote: “Assimilation and integration constitute a two-way street. Those who want to join America must be received and welcomed by those who already think they own America.”<sup>7</sup>

Although Schlesinger argues for a “two-way street,” he in fact describes a one-way transaction in which one group assimilates into a

<sup>5</sup>Katz 1976; see also Goldin and Katz 2008.

<sup>6</sup>Schlesinger 1992, 32–3.

<sup>7</sup>Schlesinger 1992, 19. The quotation continues thus: “Racism, as I have noted, has been the great national tragedy. . . . When old-line Americans, for example, treat people of other nationalities and races as if they were indigestible elements to be shunned and barred, they must not be surprised if minorities gather bitterly unto themselves and damn everybody else. Not only must *they* want assimilation and integration; *we* must want assimilation and integration too.”

dominant culture and the second group has only to embrace the idea of that assimilation.<sup>8</sup> As many have said, the assimilationist ideal converts majority cultural norms and styles into the standard to which all others, whatever their cultural background, must adhere, into which they will be “welcomed.” To the degree that members of minority groups assimilate to the cultural forms of the majority group, the cultural resources of their original traditions disappear. For instance, one expression of the assimilationist ideal experienced by one late 20th-century immigrant to the U.S.—and reinforced even by medical advice—was the view that immigrant children should actively suppress their mother tongues in order to maximize their performance in English.<sup>9</sup>

The novelist, Ralph Ellison, articulated a counter-ideal in his 1952 National Book Award winning novel, *Invisible Man*:

Whence all this passion to conformity anyway?—diversity is the word. Let man keep his many parts and you’ll have no tyrant states. Why, if they follow this conformity business they’ll end up forcing me, an invisible man, to become white, which is not a color but the lack of one. But seriously, and without snobbery, think of what the world would lose if that should happen. America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain.<sup>10</sup>

In place of the melting-pot, Ellison evokes an image of the U.S. as a woven tapestry, with richly intricate patterns of difference. As a novelist, Ellison did not convert his embrace of diversity into formal policy proposals, but those who worked in his wake—drawing on any number of intellectual, artistic, and activist traditions that had made points similar to his—developed a politics of multiculturalism. Canada was a leading site, thanks to the work of the 1960s Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism;<sup>11</sup> and the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor provided

<sup>8</sup>Parham 2012.

<sup>9</sup>Experience of Carola Suarez-Orozco as narrated to author by Marcelo Suarez Orozco, October 6, 2014.

<sup>10</sup>Ellison 1980 [1952], 557.

<sup>11</sup>This commission was charged: “to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races [French and English], taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution” (Davidson Dunton and Laurendau 1967, xxi).

In 1971, following on the work of this commission, the Canadian federal government decided to pursue a policy of multiculturalism, not bi-culturalism, eventually, in the early

the ground-breaking philosophical expression of this ideal in his 1994 book *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*.<sup>12</sup>

Yet the multicultural ideal, too, has come under critique, from both right and left. Some voices, primarily but not exclusively on the right, feared that multicultural policies were antithetical to social cohesion, generating instead, to quote Schlesinger, Jr., again, “fragmentation, resegregation, and tribalization.”<sup>13</sup> On the left, cultural critic Homi Bhabha argued that the multiculturalist view dangerously essentializes culture, as if there are fixed boundaries between cultural groups, and, for each of us, an unchanging individual identity tethered to the cultural tradition into which each is born.<sup>14</sup> Bhabha made the case that cultural life is instead characterized by hybridity, or a constant evolution in how each of us represents our identity, fashioning that identity, as we do, in contexts of contestation, out of whatever materials are to hand, which may themselves have disparate historical and cultural sources.<sup>15</sup>

Bhabha’s arguments have been extended through the work of feminists like Iris Young and Kimberlé Crenshaw, who argue for the importance of “seriality” and “intersectionality” to the identity of any given individual.<sup>16</sup> Let me take myself as an example. I happen to be a black, mixed-race, professional woman who is a mother of two and also a lover of Aristotle. Each of these roles comes into greater salience in different contexts. When someone invokes the responsibilities of mothers, I stand as one in a long series of mothers who’ve been called to attention by social and cultural cues. This is true of all my roles, which we might also say (modifying Young’s terminology) that I inhabit serially, one after another, in an unending sequence that is unpredictable in its ordering. Additionally, the intersections of these different roles can be complicated: my identities as a professional and as a mother are often in conflict with each other.

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1980s enshrining particular multicultural rights, for instance, language rights, in an amended constitution (Constitution Act 1982).

<sup>12</sup>Taylor 1992. Taylor’s own powerful essay was supplemented by comments from other philosophers, among them Anthony Appiah, Jürgen Habermas, and Michael Walzer, and the volume was quickly translated into Italian, French, and German, thus launching “multiculturalism” as a fully multinational subject of exploration and policy development.

<sup>13</sup>Schlesinger 1992, 17–18. The 1993 dissolution of Czechoslovakia into two nations, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, each encompassing a distinct linguistic and ethnic group, was a case in point, as was the subsequent disintegration of Yugoslavia.

<sup>14</sup>Bhabha 1994.

<sup>15</sup>Bhabha 2011.

<sup>16</sup>Young 1994; Crenshaw 1989.

These approaches to the topic of personal identity underscore a challenge for any effort to think about democratic social relations in conditions of diversity. Our approach has significant consequences for what we presume about individual identity. The assimilationist approach assumes that we can shed traditions in which we've been raised without doing damage to ourselves. The multicultural approach does not provide adequate space for self-identifications and for engagement in culture as hybrid and contested. Any approach to democratic social relations that hopes to displace these two paradigms must do a better job of recognizing that both tradition and adaptation matter for personal identity and, on the basis of this recognition, provide a framework for supporting individuals' psychological, as well as their social, flourishing.

The long-running critiques of assimilation, of an ideal of integration tied to assimilation, and of multiculturalism have hit their mark, undermining these concepts' credibility. As they have fallen away their place has been taken by Ellison's word, "diversity." Over the course of the past two decades, across the corporate, educational, and non-profit sectors of civil society, one after another institution, organization, or association has produced a "diversity statement."<sup>17</sup> But the concept of "diversity" is not in itself enough to provide a framework for understanding how best to pursue the egalitarian social relations of power-sharing that can sustain democracy in conditions of demographic diversity. To understand why not, and to understand the other conceptual tools we need in order to develop power-sharing, we need to turn to the conceptual challenges posed to the concept of "diversity" by critics, as well as to the challenges implicit in the concept itself.

### DIVERSITY: A NEW IDEAL?

In 1952, as we have seen, Ralph Ellison laid down a marker for how we ought to think about the multifarious nature of American society. "Diversity is the word," he wrote. In 1978 the U.S. Supreme Court, in its famous *Bakke* decision, adopted a diversity doctrine for jurisprudence, writing: "[I]t is not unlikely that, among the Framers, were many who would have applauded a reading of the Equal Protection Clause that states a principle of universal application and is responsive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the Nation."<sup>18</sup> The Court reaffirmed the

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Michaels 2007.

<sup>18</sup> *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 313 (1978).

diversity doctrine in the 2003 case, *Grutter v. Bollinger* “endorses[ing] Justice Powell’s view that student body diversity is a compelling state interest.”<sup>19</sup>

Yet there have been dissenters to this view, not only those who argue in favor of “color-blindness” in all matters of public and institutional policy but also those who argue that the “diversity rationale” fails to provide a framework for addressing historical injustice. As an example of the former, take Chief Justice John Roberts, who, in a 2007 Supreme Court opinion about a K–12 school integration plan, wrote that “The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.”<sup>20</sup> Roberts points us toward an ideal future where racial and ethnic differences are of no account and argues that we can reach such a future only by acting in the present as if racial and ethnic categories are irrelevant to public and institutional policies.

As an example of the latter concern that the “diversity rationale” leaves us unequipped to address historical injustice, take philosopher Lionel McPherson. He argues about higher education that “mainstream institutions of higher education have a distinctive moral responsibility to promote racial justice with respect to Black Americans.”<sup>21</sup> His argument is that Black Americans were subject to forms of injustice over many decades—not only enslavement and formal segregation, but also inequities in the use of the G.I. Bill and, throughout the 20th century, in the real estate market, with the result that black Americans have had less access to educational opportunity than whites, a form of injustice that requires rectification. Thus he writes:

If everyone suddenly had what distributive justice assigns them, questions of corrective justice would be rendered moot: ideal principles would indeed have been actualized. To acknowledge this, though, is not to accept the notion that we would do better to stop worrying about the racially unjust past and, instead, should aim in the present for distributive justice. . . . Distributive justice, in any event, will not be taking effect in the United States in the foreseeable future. Corrective justice has an important role in the meantime.<sup>22</sup>

On Macpherson’s argument, the language of diversity fails to come to grips with the problem of historical injustice. It is oriented to the present, and does not provide a justification for rectifying past wrongs.

<sup>19</sup> *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003).

<sup>20</sup> *Parents Involved*, 551 U.S. 748 (2007).

<sup>21</sup> McPherson 2015.

<sup>22</sup> McPherson 2015.

Both of these objections to the employment of a diversity rationale in the context of educational institutions make a mistake about temporality. Roberts' suggestion is that the way to transform the facts of the present into a desirable future is by acting as if that future already exists. Yet we have no empirical ground for considering this a valid theory of change, and the strategy turns attention away from the question of what justice requires in the present, given the particular social facts that characterize the present.

Macpherson's argument, too, introduces a problem about temporality. Indeed, questions of historical injustice are always plagued by such problems. While our civil law system rests on the idea that those who have been wronged ought to receive damages through civil suits, those suits depend on the idea that the damages are paid to precisely the individual who was wronged. Generalized arguments about historical injustice tend to separate the question of who specifically was wronged from the question of who exactly would receive the rectificatory form of compensation. But the more significant problem, in my view, with an argument that would set a focus on "historical injustice" above a focus on "diversity," is that this view brings with it the danger, actually, of a perpetuation of problems of injustice. In asking us to think about how in the present we should rectify past wrongs, it too dramatically shifts our attention from what should be our focus: how to build fair and just structures of opportunity and power sharing in the present in the context of great demographic diversity.

The focus on historical injustice tends to draw our attention only to the question of relations between "black" and "white" citizens; it tends to lead us to focus on an analysis of mid-20th century social structures. But our overwhelming responsibility now is to understand precisely how our opportunity structures and distributions of power function in a world where several states are already minority-majority states, where Latino/as, not African Americans, are the largest minority group, and where the whole country is already well on its way to being a country where no single ethnic group is in the majority.<sup>23</sup> This is not to say that historical questions and legacies are irrelevant. To the contrary, to understand how to change current patterns, we do need to understand historical origins. In some sense, the problem of wresting the future one wants out of the material of the present involves interrupting patterns of path dependence that can best be seen and understood only by considering

<sup>23</sup> Suarez-Orozco and Pérez 2008.

history. We must scrutinize the present so as to see our new possibilities while also identifying the gravitational pull of historical patterns and the forms of path dependence that we must interrupt. I agree with Ellison that “diversity” is a concept that can help us focus on the possibilities inherent in our present, while also requiring us to be clear-eyed about path dependencies that must be overcome.

Yet for all the usefulness of the concept of diversity and its ability to orient us toward realistic descriptions of our contemporary demographic situation, it also introduces some conceptual challenges in its own right.

### THE CONCEPTUAL CHALLENGES OF “DIVERSITY”

What exactly does the term “diversity” mean? What conceptual challenges does it introduce? The diversity strategic plan from the University of California Berkeley answers these questions succinctly:

For UC Berkeley to fulfill its core public mission, it must embody the following three principles to guide its vision of the University: excellence, equity, and inclusion. . . . But what about diversity? Is it not a guiding principle as well? Diversity is not a principle. Diversity is a fact; either it exists or it does not. Diversity—in many forms—does exist at UC Berkeley. But it is the principles of equity and inclusion—rather than representation—that will cement UC Berkeley’s excellence and continue to position it as the preeminent public university in the world.<sup>24</sup>

This diversity statement presents us with two questions, one explicit and the other implicit. The explicit question is this: is “diversity” a fact or a principle? The implicit question is this: how can any given institution ensure that “diversity” is fully leveraged for its potential benefits, rather than being a source of detrimental costs? Berkeley’s statement answers this second, implicit question by making the case that the principles of excellence, equity, and inclusion form the necessary framework for tapping into diversity in support of Berkeley’s core mission. Answering these two questions—the explicit one and the implicit one—will lead us to the material that we need in order to build a framework for thinking about egalitarian social relations in innovative ways.

First, then, for the question of whether “diversity” is a fact or a principle. Here the answer must vary from institution to institution. In the U.S. generally, demographic diversity is indeed a fact. It has been

<sup>24</sup> *UC Berkeley Strategic Plan for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity* 2009:5.

a feature of this country's make-up since the founding. The colonists themselves were a more diverse lot than is typically acknowledged, and there was of course also the diversity brought by the enslaved population and existing in the native population.<sup>25</sup> Subsequently, successive waves of immigration have brought peaks of demographic diversity, for instance at the end of the 19th century, and again in the present. Some 160 languages are spoken by students in schools in both New York City and Los Angeles.<sup>26</sup> Never has the world seen a democratic polity or citizenry so diversely constituted as is currently the case in the U.S.

Yet despite the fact of this broad and unprecedented diversity, that same level of diversity does not necessarily appear in the millions of organizations—businesses, churches, organizations, and associations—that populate civil society. To the contrary, in many sectors we continue to observe a high rate of monoculture across organizations and institutions. Sundays are nearly as segregated as they ever were.<sup>27</sup> The professoriate continues to be a predominantly white group, even as student bodies around the country become more diverse year after year.<sup>28</sup> For all the efforts of elite institutions to diversify their student bodies, an institution like Princeton University cannot claim to have the level of diversity that a Berkeley or a Stanford has, both of which now have student bodies that are majority-minority.<sup>29</sup> And even though the public universities of California, for instance, Berkeley and UCLA, do have high overall rates of diversity, that fact should not mask the very low participation rates of African Americans on those campuses. Additionally, there is the question that emerges routinely as to whether the categories I've used here to indicate diversity or the lack thereof are the right ones. One might also want to attend to diversity of religious background or political leanings, diversity of sexual orientation and gender status, or diversity of linguistic background or disability, and so on.

In other words, “diversity” now represents a fact about our national demographics. But the many institutions and organizations of civil society themselves reflect a remarkable array of demographic patterns, ranging from the monoculture of one of my own recent home institutions (the Institute for Advanced Study, a largely white and male environment) to the imperfect diversity of a UC Berkeley (a campus characterized by majority-minority diversity but also by the startling under-representation

<sup>25</sup> Bailyn 2013.

<sup>26</sup> NYC Dept of Education 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Putnam and Campbell 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Smith et al. 1996; Moreno et al. 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Berkeley Office of Planning and Analysis 2013; Stanford Facts 2019:13.

of African Americans), to the remarkable pluralism of a small college like Amherst College in Massachusetts, where 45 percent of the students are from ethnic minority groups, and each major demographic group plays a significant role on campus. Given the diversity of the country at large, no monocultural institution can any longer get that way entirely through random processes. Methods of recruitment into participation will be guided by the principles that the organization chooses as its framework for thinking about the fact of national diversity and its own specific demographic situation, and these will yield distinctive patterns of diversity or the lack thereof inside those organizations. In short, diversity is a *fact* of our national demographic situation, but it may or may not be a fact of the membership of any particular organization, institution, or association. Whether it will depend on the *principles* that each organization, institution, or association uses for organizing recruitment into membership and participation. Moreover, the principles shaping recruitment into membership or participation in institutions, organizations, and associations will have a big impact on the nature of the conditions within which any given institution pursues a project of egalitarian social relations.

The second conceptual challenge posed by diversity is, as we have seen, this: how can any given institution ensure that “diversity” is fully leveraged for its potential benefits, rather than being a source of detrimental costs? Berkeley’s statement proposes the principles of excellence, equity, and inclusion as a framework for bringing diversity in line with Berkeley’s core mission. Here the Berkeley statement is leading us toward an important point about the relationship between diversity and egalitarian social relations. The question of whether diversity can be leveraged for positive social and institutional outcomes depends on things people *do* in contexts of diversity. Those positive outcomes don’t flow automatically from the fact of diversity itself.<sup>30</sup>

Are “excellence,” “equity,” and “inclusion” the right principles both for producing, where appropriate, institutions that are not monocultural? Are they the right principles for leveraging diversity? Here I propose a prior principle: “social connectedness.” The goal of social connectedness emerges directly, as we shall see, from a definition of justice that centers on the achievement of political equality or power-sharing, and can help us think about membership policies in organizations and institutions. It is also a principle that speaks to the question of the interactional habits that are necessary to leverage diversity so as to achieve excellence, equity, and inclusion. In the sections that follow, I will define social con-

<sup>30</sup>There is extensive literature on this subject.

nectedness, and then share a framework for activating this principle for organizational re-design.

### A NEWER IDEAL: SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

As we have seen, the ideal of assimilation pursues social cohesion while sacrificing individuals' particular needs for connections to their communities of origin. The ideal of multiculturalism valorizes connections to those communities of origin at the expense of both a reasonable account of identity and social bonds. In place of these ideals, I propose an ideal of "social connectedness" that would characterize a "connected society."<sup>31</sup>

Scholars of social capital distinguish among three kinds of social ties: bonding, bridging, and linking. Bonding ties are those (generally strong) connections that bind kin, close friends, and social similars to one another; bridging ties are those (generally weaker) ties that connect people across demographic cleavages (age, race, class, occupation, religion, and the like); finally, linking ties are the vertical connections between people at different levels of a status hierarchy as in, for instance, the employment context.<sup>32</sup> Bridging ties are the hardest ones to come by. Bonding ties take care of themselves, really. They start with the family and radiate out. But bridging ties are a matter of social structure. Schools, the military, political bodies—these have typically been the institutions that bring people from different backgrounds together. A connected society is one that maximizes active—in the sense of alive and engaged—bridging ties. This generally takes the work of institutions. In contrast to linking ties, which are about relations among members of a hierarchical structure, bridging ties emerge when parties share power equally in the relationship or exchange.

Importantly, more connected societies—those that emphasize bridging ties (and, therefore, power-sharing ties)—have been shown to be more egalitarian along multiple dimensions: health outcomes, educational outcomes, economic outcomes.<sup>33</sup> Consider the impact of connectedness on labor markets. Research shows, for instance, that the majority of people who get a new job through information passed through a social network have acquired that information not from a close connection but from a distant one.<sup>34</sup> In other words, bridging ties spread economic

<sup>31</sup> Allen 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Granovetter 1973; Szreter and Woolcock 2004.

<sup>33</sup> See for instance, Ober 2008; Szreter and Woolcock 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Granovetter 1973.

opportunity rather than letting it pool in insular sub-communities within a polity. This makes sense. One's closest connections share too much of one's world; they are a lot less likely to introduce new information. We all know this intuitively. Whenever we're trying to help a friend who has been single too long, we scratch our brains to think of a further-removed social connection who might connect our friend to a whole new pool of possibilities. Perhaps that seems like a trivial example. But the most important egalitarian impacts of social connectivity flow from bridging ties and their impact on the diffusion of knowledge. Scholars working in the domain of network theory routinely invoke the epistemic benefits of bridging ties to explain why so many economic, political, educational, and health benefits flow from them.<sup>35</sup> To the degree that a society achieves greater levels of connectedness, and more equally empowers its members

<sup>35</sup>For the economy, the benefits of a connected society include:

- improvements in education because of a broader diffusion of the linguistic, intellectual, and social resources that support learning in the first place as well as impacts on personal decisions about whether to invest in education (Jackson 2009; Lareau 2011; Ludwig, Ladd and Duncan 2001);
- increases to social mobility because a better diffusion of information allows people to see opportunities and fit themselves to them (Granovetter 1973, Jackson 2009);
- increases to creativity because diverse solution approaches are more likely to be brought into conversation with one another (Page 2007);
- more efficient knowledge transmission because information travels faster across bridging connections (Granovetter 1973, Jackson 2009).

For democratic politics, the benefits of a connected society include:

- improved social awareness and public discourse because citizens have more exposure to the impacts on others of different policy questions and, with improved information flows across social ties, citizens are less likely to consider the beliefs of others to be simply incorrect (Sethi and Yildiz 2012);
- more efficient policy-planning because policy-makers can more easily draw on local knowledge to ensure alignment of policies with on-the-ground realities (Ober 2008);
- the creation of “latent publics” because social connections across communities help communities discover new kinds of alliances (Dewey 1927);
- a background cultural expectation of connectedness that sets into even sharper relief “disconnected,” “out of touch” policy approaches, such as that used by the Tories when they developed NHS reform without consultation with the holders of local knowledge.

For personal well-being, the benefits of a connected society include:

- An increased sense of agency because of access to a larger opportunity network (Allen 2004);
- Increased opportunity to develop important relational skills, not merely those that support the intimacy of bonding relations, but also the skills of the interpreter, mediator, and greeter, which serve to build and use bridging relationships (Allen 2004);
- The opportunity to protect and enjoy one's own culture without falling into isolation (Sidanius, Levin, van Laar, and Sears 2008).

For the general benefits of egalitarianism, see Pickett and Wilkinson 2011.

in economic, educational, and health domains, it builds the foundation of political equality.

Perhaps one of the most profound examples of a failure at the level of associational life in a democracy is the case of racial segregation in the U.S. I do not refer to a historical phenomenon, for instance, a relic of the mid-20th century. Racial segregation continues to have a significant impact on American life in the present and has been pretty conclusively shown to be at the root of racial inequality along all dimensions: educational inequalities in terms of achievement gaps between white and African American students; inequality in distribution of wealth; inequality in terms of employment mobility; inequality in terms of health.<sup>36</sup> Modern segregation is different from the mid-20th-century kind. Both suburbs and middle- and upper-class urban areas are more ethnically mixed than thirty years ago. But socio-economic segregation matters more now. And poor African Americans and Latino/as are now more likely to face hyper-segregation—along dimensions of both class and race.

A study of segregation by a group of economists shows that social network effects have a great impact on the distribution of goods and resources, such that segregation can be a driver of group inequality, even in hypothetical, quantitative models where groups begin with equivalent skill-sets and opportunities.<sup>37</sup>

Why does segregation have such profound effects? Common sense points the way to an explanation, which research has confirmed. All you have to do is think about what flows through social networks. At the most basic level, a human social network is like a web of streams and rivulets through which language flows. As language flows it carries with it knowledge and skills. That knowledge can be of the sort we recognize in schools: knowledge about the world or history or politics or literature. Or it can be of a practical kind: which jobs are about to come open because someone is retiring; where is a new factory about to be built bringing new opportunities to an area? This sort of information also flows with language along social networks.

Any individual has access to just as much knowledge, skill, and opportunity as his or her social network contains. And since knowledge, skill, and opportunity are power, isolation in itself reduces resources of fundamental importance to egalitarian empowerment.<sup>38</sup> Language itself

<sup>36</sup> Loury 1977, 2002; Anderson 2010; Rothstein 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Bowles, Loury, and Sethi forthcoming.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson 2010.

is one of the easiest markers to use in assessing how relatively well connected or fragmented any political community is.<sup>39</sup>

Now I need to underscore that the point I am making here is not about race or ethnicity. It is about social experience for all people. Everyone is benefitted by a rich social network and harmed by a relatively isolated or resource-impooverished social network.<sup>40</sup> The American case of racial segregation just happens to be an extreme example of a basic phenomenon that crosses all contexts, times, and places. More egalitarian societies, scholars have shown, are generally more connected societies, and connectivity is equalizing.<sup>41</sup>

Achieving a connected society does not require that individuals shed cultural specificity. Instead it requires that we scrutinize how institutions build social connections with a view to ensuring that there are multiple, overlapping pathways connecting the full range of communities in a country to one another. The ideal of a connected society contrasts to an idea of integration through assimilation by orienting us toward becoming a community of communities. A connected society respects and protects bonding ties while also maximizing bridging ties.

A connected society is one in which people can enjoy the bonds of solidarity and community but are equally engaged in the “bridging” work of bringing diverse communities into positive relations while also themselves individually desiring and succeeding at forming personally valuable relationships across boundaries of difference. Importantly, in a connected society, the boundaries among communities of solidarity are fluid, and the shape of those communities can be expected to change over time. By continuously maximizing bridging ties, a connected society ensures steadily shifting social boundaries; some bridging ties will, over time, become bonding ties. And as what were once bridging ties become bonding ties, the quest to build bridging ties must migrate to new lines of difference and division.

At the end of the previous section, I asked: what principle or principles should guide us in thinking about recruitment into membership or partnership in businesses, organizations, associations, and institutions? And what principle or principles should guide us in shaping interactional practices in contexts of diversity such that participants can leverage diversity to achieve, for instance, excellence, equity, and inclusion? The

<sup>39</sup> Lareau 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Lareau 2011

<sup>41</sup> Ober 2008; Szreter and Woolcock 2004.

answer I offer is that we need frameworks that help us achieve a connected society, defined as one that maximizes the formation of bridging ties, and cultural habits that help individuals flourish in enacting social connectedness.

### BUILDING A CONNECTED SOCIETY: A FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANIZATIONAL REDESIGN

Those who wish to re-build any organization of civil society in a direction supportive of a connected society, with diverse membership and healthy supports for both bonding and bridging relationships, need to give thought to four things: (1) values, symbols, and physical spaces; (2) organizational structures, including methods of power-sharing; (3) integration of all participants into the mission-driven activities of the organization, as well as into its social world and into the opportunities the organization provides for professional advancement; and (4) practices of recruitment and retention into participation in the organization.

For classics departments that wish to re-design themselves to recruit and retain more diverse student populations, they should begin by reviewing what their symbols and communications convey about who their resources are for. A department might ask: do our symbols and communications convey the openness, accessibility, and value to all of our intellectual pursuits? Asking this question might then force departments to do deeper work on the question of whether their intellectual pursuits are organized so as genuinely to deliver value to all. One of the greatest challenges of diversifying and integrating academic pursuits is to learn how to hear and incorporate the intellectual questions that students from varying backgrounds will bring to the material.

I grew up in Southern California in a decade when prison populations were increasing at dramatic rates. Crime and punishment were very present in the cultural context of my youth. Sitting at Princeton, reading Athenian oratory, I was immediately struck by the rarity of mention of a phenomenon that had been all around me in Los Angeles: incarceration. When I asked a question about this absence, my professor responded, "That would make a great dissertation topic." And so my journey began. This pedagogic act was symbolically important. It shared power. The question conveyed that valuable research topics might come from any perspective and contribute to advancing the field. The very matter of who owns the questions was treated as open, accessible, and egalitarian. A classics department that seeks to serve a diverse student population needs

symbols and communications that convey that the very content of the research agenda is open to change in the direction of questions brought to the field by new arrivals, bringing different experiential perspectives, and alighting on new questions. This is intellectual power-sharing.

After scrutinizing values statements, symbols, and physical spaces for what they communicate, the next thing to scrutinize are a department's organizational structures. Have people within the department been given not only responsibility but also genuine authority for moving forward with analysis and proposals in support of achieving inclusion and belonging in the department, and an egalitarian culture? Departments need to determine formally, within their organizational structure, where the capacity will reside to recognize disparities of experience within each constituency (academic personnel, staff, and students) and act in response to them. Who will mount and analyze periodic climate surveys? Who will guide departmental planning processes to improve approaches to mentorship? None of these important efforts take place unless formal responsibilities are designated, supported with genuine authority, and rewarded when the job is done well. Power has not been shared until not only responsibility but also authority has been shared. In addition to establishing formal responsibilities and authorities to support efforts at organizational re-design, it is also important for departments to review the decision-making points that structure their curriculum, their allocation of resources in support of research, and appointment and promotion processes. Are these processes structured in ways that support fair decision-making and power-sharing across lines of gender, ethnic difference, other key cleavages of experience?

Third, any department that wants to think about diversification should put the question of how to support academic, professional and social integration for everyone in their community front and center. I've put academic and professional flourishing first on the list for a reason. A bad habit of well-intentioned efforts at diversity and inclusion is to focus first and foremost on social experience. But nearly everyone who has arrived at a college or university campus, whether as a student or member of staff, is there for the sake of academic and professional goals. The success of their experiences will hinge fundamentally on whether they are able to fulfill their intellectual, academic, and professional aspirations. The questions of academic and professional flourishing, and how to achieve them, should be at the center of all diversity, inclusion, and belonging conversations, and the campus, schools, and business units should be characterized by the accessibility of opportunities for growth, development, exploration, and experimentation. The curricular and

research priorities of the campus should be responsive to and should appropriately serve the diverse array of intellectual interests brought to the table by members of the campus community and should support growth and development in innovative as well as traditional areas of study. In addition, staff should be incorporated in experiences of the rewards of the campus' academic enterprise. Relatedly, departments, classrooms, work environments, co-curricular, extra-curricular, and social experiences should be characterized by a culture of hospitality, and leaders in each of those spaces should have the skills to mitigate implicit bias, to make space for the expression of heterodox and minority viewpoints, to navigate difficult conversations, and to support the dissemination of such skills to everyone else in their unit. Just as power can be shared in newly inclusive ways in shaping the field's research agendas and in a department's decision-making structures, so too power can be shared in conversation, as members of a community are invited to convey their visions for how their academic and professional aspirations might best be supported.

Last come actual practices of recruitment and retention. I began with values, symbols, and the shape of the department's intellectual agenda, the question of organizational structure, and the need to prioritize academic, intellectual, and social integration because one wants to be able to recruit diverse cohorts of students and faculty into healthy departments, not into departments in which they will in fact feel unwelcome the moment the recruitment effort ends and life downshifts to the routine. There is little point in investing in recruitment and retention of diverse cohorts of students, staff, and academic personnel if there isn't room for real work on preparing a life inside the department that supports inclusion and belonging for all. But in some sense, this is where the fun is. Recruiting diverse student and colleague cohorts to a department is less difficult than people expect, provided that they have already begun to engage in the first three phases of work I've identified above.

The University of Chicago had produced more African American PhDs by 1943 than any other institution in the world, having graduated more than 40 black students with doctoral degrees.<sup>42</sup> A remarkable number of those early PhDs earned their degrees in zoology and marine biology. This is not because there was anything specific to these fields that was more likely than other fields to attract African American students. This was simply because the zoology faculty included strong supporters of racial equality. Two in particular, Professors Warden Clyde Allee and Frank

<sup>42</sup>Allen 2008.

Lillie, went out of their way to recruit and support African American students. Scholars of voting have documented that a personal invitation to vote from a specific person is a powerful driver of increased participation in the electorate by under-represented minorities. I'm another such example. I doubt it would ever have occurred to me to major in Classics had Josh Ober not invited me to do so and taken the time to show me what the value of the discipline could be to me. Here the act of power-sharing is not to expect students simply to arrive at one's door eager for what one has to offer; one must instead go to them.

### CONCLUSION: A CONNECTED CLASSICS PROFESSION

A connected Classics profession would be one actively seeking to diversify cohorts of students, staff, and academic personnel in order to contribute to a general reworking of the social fabric of democracy in the direction of bridging relationships in which people share knowledge acquired from different contexts and also share power. Achieving such a connected Classics profession requires openness to change in the nature of the discipline's research agenda. Perhaps comparative work, bringing in ancient or early societies outside the ancient Mediterranean, will be in order, for instance? It requires scrutinizing and potentially re-organizing key decision-points in admissions, hiring, and promotion to ensure power-sharing across lines of social difference. It requires asking newly diverse cohorts of students, staff, and faculty to contribute their visions for academic and professional success to conversations about the directions of any given department and the profession as a whole, and working to weave together a multitude of different perspectives on that question of academic flourishing. And it requires proactively inviting people from diverse perspectives to participate as co-creators in the work of the discipline.

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