PUBLIC SPACES AND SUBVERSION

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THE LARGE FOYER OF THE CENTRAL ARTS BUILDING AT MY UNIversity is full of all manner of public activity: students talking, reading, dozing, playing cards; tables representing a wide variety of ethnic communities and clubs advertising their functions, soliciting membership, and serving as gathering places; and—most directly related to the topic of this essay—students advocating mainly radical political causes, passing out material exposing and denouncing putative (and more often than not correctly imputed) wrongdoings by authorities ranging from the university administration to the federal government and beyond. It is true that both university officials and students making use of this space count on its campus setting to informally discourage use of it by other than students, but the space admits of an indefinite variety of uses, and at least no members of the university community are excluded.

Encroachment on the foyer's public activities has, however, begun creeping in from another source. A commercial coffee counter takes up some of it, and periodically the entire space is rented out for the sale of posters. While normally it is almost unthinkable that city police or even campus police would evict people or for that matter enter the foyer, at least in uniform, it is not at all unthinkable that they would intervene, and do so without sparking campuswide protest, should the student activities disrupt the sale of coffee or marketing of posters. The foyer could thus serve as a model for a number of critics of contemporary cities who see conservative political consequences in the erosion of

public spaces such as public parks and plazas that find activities within them constrained in the interests of surrounding commerce and private dwelling. Further, they deteriorate due to city neglect and shrink or disappear altogether as public land is sold off, thus leaving fewer public spaces or replacing them with private forums such as the shopping mall.

Many critics of this erosion decry it not just on an abstract principle in favour of there being places where people can do as they wish, but on the political grounds that a vibrant and oppression-free democracy demands the ability of people effectively to challenge or, indeed, to subvert the status quo. Different ways that public spaces facilitate such subversion are articulated, of which three are prominent. Most obviously, direct publicity within public places of failings within a society and exposure of those who profit from and sustain the failings is rendered difficult: soapbox oratory or its analogues is simply *verboten* in a shopping mall.[1] Less directly, public places are required for robust democratic debate and deliberation, which activities are in turn required as alternatives to a status quo-supporting form of democracy where citizen activity is limited just to voting.[2] Finally, in public places people encounter those of their fellow citizens who are less fortunate, thus calling their attention to poverty and other social problems in need of solution.[3]

In this contribution I shall support the opinion that public spaces are potentially subversive of objectionable features of society (at least of our current one) and that accordingly their erosion is to be resisted. However, the subversive potentials I see are different from the three just alluded to.

Urban Public Spaces

An urban "public space" as the term is used here refers to a physical place. While recognizing that such things as the Internet, letters to editors, and call-in radio or television shows sometimes function as spaces for the public exchange of ideas, I do not think they can substitute for physical places in a city any more than virtual classrooms can substitute for real classrooms in a school or university. Thus specified, a public space is taken as one that, in the first instance, is accessible, where this means that it is non-exclusive and demographically open. It is often noted that public spaces differ from private ones in that there is no "owner" of such spaces who can exclude people from their use. This idea does, I think, capture an important feature of public spaces, though

it needs to be qualified to note that parks, sidewalks, community centres, and similar such places are not without their own informal means of exclusion.

The most obvious limitation is that they can be too full (as those who worry about the tragedy of the commons are fond of noting), but there are other forces of exclusion, such as the conventions that limit the foyer described above to members of the university community. Meanwhile, informal conventions can also lead to relative non-exclusiveness in privately owned places, as in the case of a shopping mall in downtown Toronto which has become a gathering place each morning for senior citizens from a nearby Chinese community. A conclusion later to be drawn from these observations is that the subversive functions of an urban public space do not depend upon and may even be constrained by full non-exclusion or public ownership.

To say that public spaces are demographically open is to note that they are made use of by people from a variety of backgrounds—differentiated by age, class, occupation, ethnicity—and by people embracing a variety of values and world views. It also means that many occupants of public spaces are anonymous to one another. As in the case of exclusion, this dimension of accessibility is also not absolute. The regular occupants of a public park typically demographically reflect those in neighbourhoods around it, who, moreover, come to recognize one another in ways that mute complete anonymity. Again, I hope to show that public-space subversion requires only a measure of openness and anonymity.

To accessibility in these senses must be added two more characteristics of an urban space to make it a public space. One of these is that it is multi-functional and among its functions are some that are valued for their own sakes. A sidewalk is obviously an instrument for a pedestrian to get from one point to another. This is one of its functions. However, it can also be a destination sought for itself, as in a place for taking a stroll or indulging in the pleasures of the flâneur. The final characteristic is that public spaces possess their own identities given to them by the intersection of their physical characteristics and the predominant uses and perspectives of those who avail themselves of them. A long sidewalk may traverse many parts of a city—residential, commercial, faced by small homes or shops or large ones, well treed or not, accessing a variety of amenities, and so on, each segment with characteristics unique to it.

Sometimes public spaces with these broad features promote one or more of the subversive functions often claimed for them as earlier described: radical organization and protest, democratic deliberation and debate, opening the eyes of the affluent to unjust disparities in their cities. For those who aspire to subvert a conservative status quo, there are these good reasons to protect public spaces. While sharing this aspiration and therefore favouring the preservation and expansion of public spaces in the hopes they will sometimes perform the aforementioned functions, I nonetheless doubt that there is an essential connection between the functions and public spaces *as such*.

Some public spaces clearly sometimes figure in radical protest—streets and sidewalks for marches, parks for rallies—but they do not participate in any intimate way in engendering them. The times must be ripe, and the impetuses for radical activity come from different sources. What is objected to is that denial of these sorts of spaces impedes radical activity, as when demonstrations are banned in front of consulates or government buildings, but this is different than that the spaces, qua public spaces, are essential to acquiring radical sentiments.

Christie Pits, a park in Toronto, was a site in 1933 of a violent race riot when a baseball team largely composed of Jewish locals was attacked by members of the Swastika Club. For several decades thereafter annual demonstrations against racism were held in the Pits, and marches for this and similar causes originated there. During these years the park's identity was tied up with anti-racism. But while some historical memory of the riot remains (as in a 1999 album by the rock band The Tragically Hip),[4] Christie Pits itself is not a wellspring of anti-racist sentiment, as is evidenced by the fact that public consciousness of its identity as a place for protesting racism waxes and wanes with the rise and fall of anti-racist movement activity in the city as a whole, and other functions that originate in it (for example, an annual Santa Claus parade) displace its radical associations.

A similar point can be made about democratic debate and deliberation. Sometimes—though rarely—events designed to facilitate these things are organized in appropriate public spaces, as with the teach-ins held during the Vietnam War years on the grounds of public universities or in city squares. But, again, this is no more than making use of the spaces, for which alternatives such as a church or union hall are available, and the spaces themselves do not prompt the deliberation and debate. On the contrary, places like sidewalks, parks, plazas, boardwalks,

and squares are not especially conducive to these activities by virtue of the multiplicity of their uses, the diversity of their occupants, and their anonymity. Champions of deliberative democracy see it as taking place among people with diverse views and life experiences, while insisting that all participants must be motivated to engage in the deliberation. But those who are in a place for a purpose other than deliberation can only view attempts to engage them in such as annoyances at best and assaults by cranks (not, let us face it, utterly foreign to public spaces) at worst.

The thesis about public spaces educating people to injustices comes the closest to establishing an intimate connection between the spaces and subversive attitudes, and, sadly, taking strong stands against economic injustice today is subversive of the status quo. However, there is no guarantee or even probability regarding this result. Also, the experience can backfire. Ironically, the more widespread the poverty experienced in public places, the less likely it is to have the radicalizing effect. When, in my city, homeless people began to appear begging on the streets, there was indeed outrage that the city could have come to this, and people would often stop to talk to the homeless, give them food or coins, and discuss their plight and what to do about it with others. However, as the numbers of the homeless and the begging escalated, there were too many to help personally, the problem as a social one began to appear insurmountable, and people learned how to ignore and literally step over the homeless. Similarly, where the numbers of homeless people expanded to the point that some downtown parks were becoming unusable by ordinary citizens, the parks were either absented by the citizens or measures were taken to exclude the homeless by such means as removing or redesigning benches.

Homo Ludens

In the rest of this essay, I shall suggest two ways that public spaces are more intimately subversive, at least potentially. The first connection was highlighted by Constant Nieuwenhuys and other members of the International Situationists, the avant-garde urban design and architectural movement of the 1960s and early 1970s. Drawing on a celebrated work by anthropologist Johan Huizinga,[5] they lamented the way that cities were functionally organized to promote work, informed by an image of a human as a producer—*Homo faber*—rather than as a seeker of creativity, pleasure, fun, and play—*Homo ludens*. Constant proposed a model
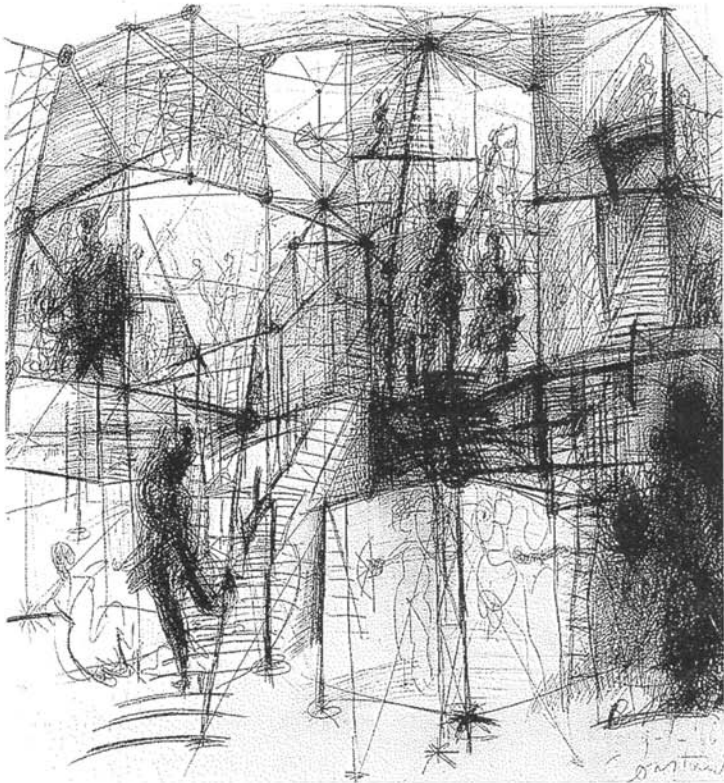
Homo ludens, pencil on paper by Constant, 1965–1966, 52 3/8 x 52 3/8 in. (133 x 133 cm).
Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

for a city, "New Babylon," designed to facilitate the latter activities.[6]
Whether it is realistic for an entire city to be built on this model (and Constant did think this realistic), there are obviously places within all cities reserved for fun and play, some publicly owned and administered (exhibitions, fairs, public sports facilities), some private (theme parks, stadiums, bars, and the like).

A city devoid of any such places would be a dreary place in which to live or work, and their ubiquity attests to a human need for them. But public spaces as described in this essay have characteristics not shared by these other venues. Public-space fun is often, perhaps typically, spontaneous and opportunistic. One budgets time and usually money to go to a theme park, museum, or sporting event with specific recreational activities in mind. In a public place people find themselves stopping at a bench to rest and watch the passing parade, window

shopping, engaging in unchallenging *bavardage* with strangers, perhaps joining into shared sporting activities, exercising. In the organized sites for recreation, everyone is recreating with reference to the same thing, like watching the game, taking the same rides, or drinking beer.[7] In a public space a variety of activities are taking place: passing through, caring for children, sitting about, playing chess or cards, walking dogs, eating a snack, sketching, playing musical instruments, and so on.

A champion of Constant's New Babylon vision might note that organized and planned fun, unlike that of the public spaces, is not fun for its own sake but something that functions to enable people to continue work in the future and reward them for past work. This brings us to what it is about public-space fun that is potentially subversive of a status quo. The Situationists retrieved some revolutionary themes of Paul Lafargue, who (in distinction from the view of his father-in-law, Karl Marx, that in communism work would be "life's prime want") regarded all human woes as "due to man's passion for work" and urged the proletariat to "proclaim its right to idleness.... refuse to work more than three hours a day, and spend the rest of the twenty-four hours in repose and revelry."[8]

The point of Constant and the others, like that of Lafargue, was not just or primarily to endorse one sort of life style; it was political. A culture of work was seen as growing from and sustaining an oppressive society, namely that described by another of the Situationists, Raoul Vaneigem:

> What spark of humanity ... can remain alive in a being dragged out of sleep at six every morning, jolted about in suburban trains, deafened by the racket of machinery, bleached and steamed by meaningless sounds and gestures, spun dry by statistical controls, and tossed out at the end of the day into the entrance halls of railway stations, those cathedrals of departure for the hell of weekdays and the nugatory paradise of weekends, where the crowd communes in weariness and boredom?... From the butchering of youth's energy to the gaping wounds of old age, life cracks in every direction under the blows of forced labour. Never before has a civilization reached such a degree of contempt for life.[9]

The political dimension of the Situationist critique fits nicely with the orientation of their contemporary, Henri Lefebvre, for whom people's "right to a city" centrally includes the right to live in a city the urban design, architectures, politics, infrastructures, and landscapes of which are not subordinated to capitalist economic needs.[10] Many things impede

the realization of this right, but among them is a culture of *Homo faber* harboured by the very people—that is, nearly everyone—whose lives are regimented by exigencies of a mass-market, industrialized economy.

Not all public spaces prompt or sustain the fun-for-its-own-sake activities that run counter to this culture, and how powerful tendencies in this direction are is no doubt a matter of degree. An important quality of public spaces that helps is their multi-functionality. That the very same park or sidewalk that one walks through or on to go to work (school, shopping) is also the place in which one can stop and enjoy oneself inhibits ghettoization of playful places and a concomitant schizophrenia.[11] The cultural revolution sought by the Situationists is not one where people are workaholics during weekdays and celebrants of life in the evenings and on weekends; it is a transformation of one's view of life priorities as a whole, as well as support for appropriate social, economic, and built-environment transformations.

It should be emphasized that the Situationists were not arguing in Luddite fashion for dismantling the instruments of modern industry. Indeed, the buildings and city plans Constant projected for New Babylon are as far from garden city bungalows or deindustrialized rural communities as can be imagined. He was concerned, rather, with priorities. Nor is it suggested that a proliferation of public spaces will of itself engender a social revolution dedicated to repose and revelry. Instead the claim made here is that in offering invitations, so to speak, to spontaneous, free, and rewarding enjoyment not implicated in the mandates of work and of a society geared toward work, public spaces, if there are enough of them and if they genuinely exhibit the characteristics ascribed to a public space earlier, have the potential to help erode a culture of work in favour of a culture of fun. This, in turn, is a precondition for concerted and in the end political action to challenge and transform a society the overriding aim of which is to reproduce industrial and market-driven cycles of work.

Trusteeship

For Lafargue's father-in-law, work as it would exist in a future communist society was something that would not need to be coerced; rather, it would be done in a spirit of co-operation. While from a Situationist perspective this does not justify promotion of *Homo faber*, and may even perniciously sugar-coat it, in contemporary, capitalist society a culture

of work is conjoined with another component of popular culture, also supportive of an oppressive status quo, namely that of "possessive individualism." This term was coined by the Canadian political theorist C. B. Macpherson. The key components of a possessive-individualist culture are self-centredness, fixation on private ownership, consumerism, and greed. These attitudes, when they are dominant, describe the world view, or what Macpherson called the ontology, of a "market society."

The term *consumerism* is used by Macpherson in the ordinary sense (i.e., people putting an excessively high priority on acquiring consumer goods), but it takes on the further meaning for him of a thirst for indefinite, indeed infinite, consumption, thus shading into greed. Being self-centred carries the usual meaning of pursuing one's own interests without voluntarily accommodating the interests of others. Macpherson adds that in a market society people place a very high value on possessing and respecting private property, and they particularly value the idea that people have a right to dispose of their property as they please. This value becomes a fixation when the market value of a good is regarded as its most important characteristic and when virtually everything is thought of as a commodity or a potential commodity. This includes people themselves where one's sense of self-worth is tied up with how much he or she privately owns and where among the things that people regard as their property are themselves.[12]

Coexisting with this ontology, though overwhelmed by possessive individualism in a market society, is a view foreshadowed by Aristotle in his conception of a fulfilling life and in modern times found in some liberal-democratic thinkers, notably John Stuart Mill and John Dewey, where humans aim to develop their "truly human potentials" to the fullest and a robust democracy is achieved to the extent that all are able to do so. Macpherson's aim was to undermine the culture of possessive individualism and to retrieve the idea of what he called "developmental democracy," where people co-operate to achieve a society where everyone has the opportunity to develop his or her proper potentials.[13]

Of the several things that must be accomplished to make progress toward developmental democracy, the key cultural component is to subvert fixation on property. In particular, the notion that people have at least a presumptive right to dispose of their possessions and of their own talents as they please needs to be supplanted by a stance toward these things where one is seen as their trustees. It is very rarely, if ever, that a person's possession of something results entirely from his or her

personal efforts. Luck plays a big role, and in any case things possessed are usually the product of long and complex histories of social labour. The same thing can be said of talents. Some are inherited, and the ability to develop and take advantage of them, again, depends upon a lot of social factors, beginning with how a person is raised and educated.

Still, the notion that possessions and talents are the private property of individuals who accordingly can dispose of them with or without consideration of the consequences for others or for the future just as they please is deeply engrained in a market society. Some now all-too-obvious results are environmental crises that might, arguably, have been averted if in the past people had seen themselves as trustees of the earth for future generations rather than having viewed it as a source for individual appropriation and exploitation. Similar observations can be made about urban decay and sprawl.

Retrieving a culture of trusteeship is no small feat, but public spaces offer one potential venue for nurturing such a culture. To the extent that people who make use of a public space take some responsibility for it—for instance, by helping to keep it clean and defending it from encroachment as for private development—they may begin to learn and inculcate a habit of trusteeship generally. Of course, there are other venues where people act collectively to preserve and protect something, most notably the homes or institutions, such as a church or club, of which they are members. But these cases often still have a possessive dimension to them: the home, church, or club is regarded as the property of specified groups of people. By contrast, the collections of people who make use of a public space are largely anonymous to one another, and most realize that in protecting the space they are doing so for an indefinite number of also anonymous present and future fellow occupiers of the space. Hence, taking responsibility for a public space involves a measure of trusteeship, where this has the potential of generalization to other venues, such as the city as a whole, regarded as itself a public space writ large.

Not everyone who makes use of a public space adopts a stance of trusteeship toward it, but certain features of a public space encourage some to do so. One of these is that public spaces can be places of *Homo ludens*, that is, places of fun for its own sake. Threatened loss or degradation of such a place is more likely to call forth determination to protect it than threats to places that are nothing more than instruments for achieving some goal outside of them (a sidewalk as nothing but a means

of getting to some destination). The option of finding alternative means is always a possibility in these cases. It might be thought that the same is true of public spaces as ones of enjoyment, but here I think a feature these spaces share with homes, churches, or clubs, namely, that they have identities of their own, comes into play. Insofar as the unique character of a public space contributes to its enjoyment, something is irreplaceably lost if the space degenerates or disappears.

Openness and Publicness

Just as not all public spaces realize a potential to engender a culture of *Homo ludens*, so not all nurture trusteeship. Conditions conducive to these results must be right. One condition has to do with the way that the non-exclusivity of a public space is a matter of degree. In order for public spaces to have the desired consequences they must retain an element of anonymity and openness. The swimming pools of gated communities or the back lawns of condominiums do not foster a general ethic of trusteeship, and whatever joyful activity is engaged in them is similarly ghettoized. At the same time, a public space whose population is so open that there are no "regulars" to form the nucleus for collective care of the space will fail to offer opportunities for trustee activity. People cannot enjoy a space if it is populated not just by a variety of different people but by some whom they find threatening or frightening. Required is a certain and likely delicate balance.

Another condition pertains to the nature and degree of the "publicness" of the spaces in question. Earlier it was noted that privately owned spaces can function as public ones. Sometimes this is possible because the spaces have been, as it were, seized by a public. This is the case with the Toronto mall, referred to earlier, that is largely taken over in the mornings by the Chinese seniors. At first owners and managers of this mall worried that the large number of mainly non-customer occupants of tables and benches would cut into business, but against this they had to take into account the bad public relations that would certainly follow forced eviction. Later, they saw advantages as the presence of this community lent an aura to the mall (indeed, an identity) that many others found attractive thus, in fact, increasing business. Also, in a kind of symbiosis, the seniors, not wanting to jeopardize the availability of this space, are careful to confine their use to the pre-lunchtime mornings. Analogues can be found in other malls and in other privately owned places,

such as some bars or cafés, but, again, requisite conditions cannot always be counted on.

Fostering trusteeship in spaces that are publicly owned requires different, but also unique, conditions. Such a place is already held in trust by the public body that administers it, for instance, a municipal agency. If that body completely abdicates its responsibilities, this might prompt citizen action to maintain the venue, but it can also discourage such action, in part by making the task too daunting, in part by deflecting enthusiasm for public trusteeship to anger ("Why should we do the job of a derelict government for it?"). At another extreme, a city agency that insists on complete control over a public place does not leave tasks for ordinary citizens to perform and may even actively discourage involvement. (This scenario is not imagined: a committee in my neighbourhood that wanted to clean up a local park was initially denied permission by the city to do so, claiming fear of liability for possible injuries and reactions of the union representing park workers.) Again, only situations falling between these extremes will be conducive to trusteeship-favouring activities.

Urban Challenges

These considerations about openness and publicness throw into relief some problems. If one of the requirements of a public space fostering a culture of *Homo ludens* is that people not feel threatened by others using the space, and if they find the presence of homeless people or those they fear out of racial or other prejudice threatening, they will be tempted either to abandon the space or try to exile the threatening others from it, as, for instance, in the forced removal of homeless people from New York's Times Square. In addition to the morally objectionable aspect of such attitudes, an effect is to make places to play into places to hide, thus perpetuating closed-minded attitudes and exacerbating them with a fortress mentality. Repose and revelry are still, of course, possible, but they are diminished and hard to sustain when conjoined with paranoia.

A problem regarding trusteeship and government action or inaction is that whether governments are prepared to take responsibility for a public space while at the same time facilitating citizen involvement in its care is usually a matter of serendipity. Proactive measures are impeded by the weak form of democracy current in most cities where, as at other levels government, citizens are for the most part no more than passive

voters, and city government officials and civil servants have, at best, paternalistic attitudes toward citizens.

For reasons given earlier in the essay, I do not think that protecting and multiplying public spaces is in any central or direct way effective for addressing these sorts of problems. Rather, successfully combating racism, dealing justly with homelessness, and achieving integration of government and citizen action are themselves preconditions for public spaces to realize their subversive potentials. Concerted and society-wide campaigns around these issues are in order. Political campaigns to deepen and extend citizen input to the governing of their city (as in community councils), economic and public health campaigns to address the sources of homelessness, educational campaigns against racism and prejudice—these efforts are clearly important to pursue in their own right. If success contributes to public-space subversion, so much the better.

NOTES

1 One illustration of this complaint is in a paper by John Paul Jones III, "The Street Politics of Jackie Smith," in *Companion to the City*, ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (London: Blackwell, 2003), 448–59; another is in Don Mitchell, "The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public and Democracy," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, no. 1 (March 1995): 108–33.

2 This is a central theme in Robert Beauregard and Anna Bounds's paper, "Urban Citizenship," in *Democracy, Citizenship and the Global City*, ed. Engin Isin (London: Routledge, 2000), 248 and passim. Another example is John R. Parkinson, "Does Democracy Require Physical Public Space?" in *Does Truth Matter? Politics and Public Sphere in Democracy*, ed. Raf Geenens and Ronald Tinnevelt (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2008).

3 Margaret Kohn describes this concern (along with several others) in *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7–9.

4 *Phantom Power*; the song is "Bobcaygeon."

5 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

6 Constant's essay "New Babylon" is published along with other Situationist documents in Libero Andreotti and Xavier Costa, eds., *Theory of Dérive* (Barcelona: MACRA & ACTA, 1996), 154–69. In a similar spirit, Iris Young, referring to Roland Barthes, identifies eroticism ("the pleasure and excitement of ... encountering the novel, strange and surprising"), as essential to urban life, in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 239–40.

7   Citing perhaps the best-known Situationist, Guy Debord, for support, Margaret Kohn notes that movie theatres, sports stadiums, and such like position individuals "as spectators rather than participants," thus, in her view, missing the interactive dimension of public spaces (Kohn, *Brave New Neighborhoods*, 14).

8   Paul Lafargue, *The Right to Be Lazy* (Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1907), 29. The passage as quoted is taken from the superior translation used in Leszek Kolakowski's *Main Current of Marxism*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 147, in a chapter on Lafargue. Marx's comment about work being life's prime want is in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875) in *Karl Marx & Frederick Engels: Selected Works in One Volume* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 324.

9   Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, published in 1968 as *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992) and translated by John Fullerton and Paul Sieveking in 1972.Vaneigem continues, alas optimistically but not uncommonly in 1968, by extolling the artistic, political-activist, and sexual revolutions of that epoch as a front "against forced labour" and as "molding the consciousness of the future."

10 Henri Lefebvre, *The Right to a City* (1968), published in English translation in Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, eds., *Henri Lefebvre: Writings on Cities* (London: Blackwell, 1996). Lefebvre himself interacted with the Situationists, and similarities bearing on the thesis of this paper are noted by Rosalyn Deutsche, "Breaking and Entering: Drawing, Situationism, Activism," in *The Activist Drawing: Retracing Situationist Architectures from Constant's New Babylon to Beyond*, ed. Catherine de Zegher and Mark Wigley (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 75–81.

11 Though not identical, the point is akin to one made by Barbara Rahder and Patricia Wood, who contrast the experience-limiting confines of the car to the variegated experiences on a city sidewalk: "From the sidewalk, we see [all one can in a car] plus the headlines of newspapers in their boxes, the fruit that's in season at the grocers, local workers waiting for the bus, seniors enjoying the garden in front of their retirement villa, parents pushing strollers, young nannies with toddlers, dogs lapping at bowls of water while their owners chat over coffee—and we can smell the freshly baked bagels, hear the conversation about changing school districts. As we stroll, hundreds of threads of city life spin around us." In "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Future," in *Utopia: Towards a New Toronto*, ed. Jason McBride and Alana Wilcox (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2005), 238–39.

12 The essential theory is developed by Macpherson by tracing the early political-philosophical expressions of this culture in thinkers from Thomas Hobbes to John Locke in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

13 This view is most fully developed by Macpherson in *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). Examples Macpherson gives

of truly human potentials include the potential "for rational understanding, for moral judgment and action, for aesthetic creation or contemplation, for the emotional activities of friendship and love, and, sometimes, for religious experience" (ibid., 4). The potentials have in common that their achievement by some people does not mean they cannot be achieved by other people. Indeed, most potentials require co-operation, on which, moreover, they typically thrive as people enter into valued projects with others.