

Civic Dialogue: Attending to Locality and Recovering Monologue¹

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This essay examines civic dialogue that is connected to local roots. The conceptual emphasis suggests that locality often houses what one might term monologic tendencies. The conviction of this essay is that without acknowledgment and understanding of what matters to another, that is, of the importance of monologue, the possibility of maintaining a vital public sphere that is open to a multiplicity of ideas and positions is minimal. In this essay, the term monologue is not to be confused with a particular style of communication, but IS the ground of the conviction that one takes into a given discourse. Monologue houses the ground of the conviction that shapes what we seek to protect and promote in a given communicative exchange. Monologue is the creative engine of conviction that shapes the uniqueness of our participation and contribution to any potential dialogic interaction.² To illustrate this point, I turn to the Scottish Enlightenment and the insights of Adam Ferguson as he wrote them in *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. The essay explicates a series of implications that arise from Ferguson's work and have relevancy to an understanding of civic dialogue that accounts for the local. Ferguson's distinct contribution was his refusal to dismiss the monologic sentiments of places of particularity.

Keywords: dialogue, monologue, civic, Ferguson, Scottish Enlightenment, locality

Dialogue, as a communicative counter to telling and imposition, shapes my conviction that there is still a communicative 'hope for this hour,' that continues long after Martin Buber penned this phrase in 1952 (Buber 1957, 220–229). This essay rests on the assumption that one should eschew the dangers of incisive discourse that borders on domination. This essential dialogic orientation requires interrogation from a postmodern reading of dialogue that is attentive to Jean Baudrillard's emphasis on 'irony' (Baudrillard 1996). If one demands that dialogue is triumphant in a given communicative encounter, is it not ironical that the mandate or demand for dialogue can morph into a moral communicative self-righteousness? Imposed 'dialogue' culminates in a communicative posture of telling, undercutting the mutual communicative possibilities between and among partners. Buber

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- 1 An earlier version of this essay was presented as a plenary address at the Civic Dialogue and Leadership Conference held at Texas A&M University, April 3–6, 2014.
- 2 See 'The Fulcrum Point of Dialogue: Monologue, Worldview, and Acknowledgement,' by the author for a further understanding of monologue.

gestured toward this awareness as he separated dialogue from the act of ultimatum, which, ironically, results in dialogue morphing into a monologic mandate. What happens when I no longer understand listening as my principal obligation and shift this responsibility to others, with the demand that they accommodate my approved manner of communicative meeting? Buber's conception of dialogue would reject this unintended consequence of turning listening and attending to the other into an ideological stance of communicative adherence. Dialogue, like any good, then assumes an ideological status.

I desire to recover the importance of monologue as the pragmatic fulcrum upon which the potential for dialogue itself pivots. This presentation of dialogue yields the following question about civic dialogue: What does civic dialogue resemble when it pragmatically acknowledges the importance of telling, and reconfigures the everyday relevance of monologue in civic life? Additionally, this essay situates the notion of civic life within another pragmatic assertion: there is no single conception of civic participation. I ground 'civic' in Jean-François Lyotard's admission that we dwell within a multiplicity of *petit récits* or 'little narratives' (Lyotard 1984, 60). Such multiple narratives locate civic dialogue in difference, within an era of narrative and virtue contention. This perspective on civic dialogue is framed within a hypertextual³/postmodern position. I conceptualise postmodernity not as a sequential evolution after modernity, but as a recognition that multiple and, at times, contending conceptions of existence are co-present. Postmodernity acknowledges a loss of narrative and virtue that form a common ground, making the recognition of the monologic conviction from which another commences communication as a pragmatic starting point for the invitation of dialogue. This essay privileges difference, assuming a multiplicity of opinion in civic space and the vibrant importance of monologic conviction as the performative beginning of dialogue.

Dialogic Coordinates and Confession

The background assumptions that propel this essay, 'Civic Dialogue: Attending to Locality and Recovering Monologue', are twofold: What are the ironical unintended consequences of the demand for dialogue and the limitation of the notion of civic to a single conception? What happens when one refuses to understand the monologic convictions of self and other in the supposed act of civic dialogue? Communicative background constitutes the meaning or communicative bias that one takes to any

3 The conception of a hypertextual moment emerges from Umberto Eco's notion of hypertextuality, which points towards multiple moments that occur simultaneously and inform the contemporary moment. See Umberto Eco, 'Books, Texts, and Hypertexts,' in *The Power of Words: Literature and Society in Late Modernity* 135, no. 23 (2005): 23–34.

dialogic encounter (Arnett and Holba 2012). This position of interpretive bias contrasts with that of modernity, which languishes in the assumptions of objectivity that foster the illusion of standing above the historical moment. Modernity discounts the restraints of situated, embedded, and localised perspectives, minimising the vitality of provinciality (Arnett 2013). In *Communication Ethics in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt's Rhetoric of Warning and Hope*, modernity is defined as a secular trinity that emphasises 1) efficiency, 2) individual autonomy, and 3) progress (Arnett 2013). Dialogue, understood within an era of narrative and virtue contention, rejects these assumptions, turning towards: 1) the invitational and the revelatory, 2) embedded and situated agency, and 3) the recognition of difference, refusing to conflate the new with progress.

The narrative of modernity discounts the ground upon which a communicator dwells, acting as if social and historical constraints, limits and questions are delusions. Modernity offers us a garden of promises via processes and procedures that seek to bypass local soil that is cultivated through individual and collective labour that necessitates burden and toil. My contention is that civic dialogue, understood within the mythology of modernity, places the communicative agent above the human condition, missing the existential fulcrum of decision-making, and this orientation dismisses the power of the local communicative environment. Asserting that one is engaged in dialogue does not equate with the performative reality of dialogue. This is the reason Paulo Freire (1970) rejected the use of the term 'dialogue' when communication between a dominant class and a class with less power occurred. As the aristocracy depended upon bloodline and wealth in order to avoid identification with the poor and oppressed, modernity offers us process and procedure with a similar objective — an evasion of the messy nature of attentiveness to the other and the distinctiveness of communicative environments. This essay revisits an ideology that turns attentive listening into a requirement for the other that seeks to lessen one's own responsibility. It situates civic dialogue within the public arena, within a field of possibilities — prior, during, and after a given exchange — that requires the rolling up of sleeves, getting one's hands dirty, and recognising that the dialogic task has no concluding timer as we rub shoulders with local customs and bias. Acknowledgement of the local does not assume approval, but it does require attentive engagement.

This essay follows a conceptual journey that is unconventional, moving from the importance of dialogic listening to a refashioning of the importance of monologic convictions. This undertaking investigates what Karl Jaspers called the 'boundary limits' or 'limit-situation' of my own privileged assumptions about dialogue

(Jaspers 1969, 166).⁴ Jaspers sought to emphasise the existential realities of human life, recognising and focusing upon boundaries and limits to life itself (Bornemark, 2006). The boundary limit of death is an obvious existential coordinate of life. In the case of dialogue, a fundamental boundary limit is met at the moment a dialogic invitation morphs into a demand for dialogue without acknowledging what is of narrative importance to another. I engage Jaspers's conception in two ways. First, I re-examine the vitality that comes from telling and its value within a dialogic perspective, arguing that monologue itself is an essential aspect of dialogue. Second, I follow Jaspers's existential attentiveness, turning to Adam Ferguson's conception of existence, one he fashioned in his famous essay on civic society. Ferguson, as one of the major representatives of the Scottish Enlightenment, engaged with 'conjectural history,' which, I contend, has dialogic qualities (Stewart 1854, 384). Dugald Stewart coined this term in 1790 in order to explicate history in a conversation with existence that yields future implications, suggesting possibilities and potential repercussions. This view of history was not a conjectured fantasy but, rather, a conjectured imagination that yields learning and instruction. Immanuel Kant's differentiation between imagination and fantasy (Kant 1798, 60–78) lives within this construct of conjectural history, which two other luminaries of the Scottish Enlightenment, David Hume and Adam Smith, also employed. Adam Ferguson's civic project is the central text of this essay, which offers conjectural implications for civic dialogue in this historical moment that are based on Ferguson's eighteenth-century perspective.

I confess to situating an understanding of dialogue that explicates the hermeneutic objective of this essay, stressing the communicative background, which will necessitate a recovery of the importance of monologue, the existential ground of conviction that one takes into communicative engagement. This essay, in Gestalt terms, primarily concentrates on the communicative 'background' that discloses bias and prejudice in order to illuminate 'foreground' application (Gadamer 1975). Hans-Georg Gadamer frames this orientation with this assertion: 'The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings' (Gadamer 1975, 238). My postulation, which aligns with Gadamer's well-argued position, is that background assumptions shape the interpretation of what we discern and understand. What we bring to an event matters; this position rejects the modern myth of objectivity that asserts that we can stand above the human condition and render purity of judgment as a form of Sartrean 'bad faith' (Arnett 2013; Sartre 1953, 86–116).

4 See Jonna Bornemark, 'Limit-situation. Antinomies and transcendence in Karl Jaspers' Philosophy' for a further discussion of terms.

An embedded and situated communicator who understands the significance of the local in dialogue with a cosmopolitan posture rejects intervention from above, whether in the form of blind adherence to authority or objective process and procedure, and a conception of oneself as a sovereign being untangled from all social constraints. An embedded postmodern communicator disavows belief in a modernist version of *deus ex machina*, a Greek theatrical gesture in which God comes down from the heavens and intervenes in a given drama: the fanciful assertion that a human being can discover an objective platform from which to discover Truth. Both *deus ex machina* and objectivity seek height above the human condition; they offer a communicator a false warrant to impose 'Truth' upon others. Dialogic confession, as previously framed in the Bonhoeffer project (Arnett 2005), rejects such blind faith. In performative terms, dialogic confession demands that we assume responsibility, as we knowingly speak from the 'tainted ground' of position, standpoint, and bias (Arnett 2008). One's contribution to the other, at a minimum, is the disclosure of the presuppositions that guide one's understanding of existence itself. Dialogic confession is performed in the written, oral, and action realms of communicative life. The performative nature of dialogic confession moves it from the confines of authorial intent to the admission of bias and prejudice (Arnett 2005). Dialogic confession commences with an articulation of the limits of modernity and the countering of the abstract notion of individual autonomy. It situates communicative engagement within an environmental, historical, and social narrative.

Both Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault stated that the author is dead (Barthes 1977; Foucault 1984). Their statements cannot, however, be understood within a natural attitude of conventional modern thought. Barthes and Foucault did not reject the notion of the author; they disavowed a modernist rendition of authorship. Their argument was that the author does not control, possess, or manage the intentional meaning of a text. The author is situated within an environment, history, and narratives that both limit and extend what is said and understood. The author is necessary, but insufficient, for communicative meaning. Postmodern critiques of the author or communicative agent acknowledge the embedded, situated, and relational nature of communicative engagement. This assumption unmasks a taken-for-granted assumption about modernity, where the communicative environment of the local and anything other than convention are disavowed. This rejection is not propelled by authorial intent, but by what Hannah Arendt considered to be the conceptual fuel of a 'banality of evil': thoughtlessness (Arendt 1965, 287). In this historical moment, communicative background assumptions necessitate attention; they guide foreground action. Of course, both background and foreground are important. However, the temporal energy that directs a communicative agent comes from communicative background

and focuses the clarity of responsiveness. Modernity assumes that processes and methods of objectivity give rise to pristine Truth. For Arendt, during modernity the emphasis on pristine Truth occurred alongside the diminishing importance of traditions and background, in which traditions wore 'thinner and thinner [until their threads]...finally broke.' (1954/2006, 14). The emphasis on communicative background, on the other hand, demands attentive regard for 'tainted ground' that impacts on the communicators, both those present and those not at the table of conversation (Arnett 2008).

Tying dialogue to the notion of the civic moves conversation to the public sphere. Arendt's conception of the 'public domain' assists the conversation; she understood the public domain as a dwelling for a 'multiplicity of opinions' that, additionally, includes 'interspaces' between ideas and persons (Arendt 1968, 31; Arendt 1977). Arendt's view of the public domain naturally shifts the discussion from a singular telling about one public to a discourse that stumbles towards a multiplicity of opinions in what we can term a civic dialogue. Modernity, propelled by a 'secular trinity of efficiency, individual autonomy, and progress,' protects and promotes a singular supreme good, the universal (Arnett 2013, 4). This supreme good may be seen in the notion of 'the One,' a pervasive concept that can be traced back to Thales (c. 625–547 B.C.), whom Aristotle (c. 384–322 B.C.) considered to be the founder of philosophy. The notion of 'the One,' correlated with the notion of civic dialogue, presupposes the reality of a single truth that subsumes all other truths, burying the local under the edifice of the universal.

The conception of 'the One' assumes that all things have one origin and one underlying nature. Thales offers a picture of the One as water. Water takes multiple forms, but it is the essence of water that unites, offering the One. The stress on the One continues with Anaximander (c. 610–546 B.C.), who offers us a view of the One as the place of origin that we cannot see or touch. Anaximander details a space before the concrete, the 'boundless,' which is akin to what we might term the infinite. The boundless is the place of origin for Anaximander (Melchert 2007, 11–14).

The pursuit of the One does not die with the early Greeks; it continues to define the West. In fact, it is central to the very identity of the West. The idea of the One has numerous tributaries, or what might better be termed humanly constructed canals. One witnesses throughout history the struggle for the One from clan to nation state to monotheism. The pursuit of a singular god, a singular direction for social and economic development, and the modern expression of individualism are examples of this pursuit of one unifying truth that is presumed to serve humanity. In each case, the larger communicative environment goes unattended.

I now turn to Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. My rationale for including Ferguson is twofold. First, he models conjectural history, which I contend is both dialogic and riddled with bias. I suggest that Ferguson's conversation is not possible without the specific historical circumstances of the local soil and the unique historical moment that is termed the Scottish Enlightenment. Second, the implications of his work suggest the vitality of the old, the primitive, and the barbaric; he turns toward an energetic heart of conviction. Throughout his book, Ferguson presents the acts of what he calls a 'primitive nation,' with America as the prime example. Then he moves to detail what he called a 'polished nation,' only to loop back dialectically to retrieve the values of the primitive nation that yield the reason for sacrifice in protecting convictions, relations, and locality. I do not defend Ferguson's language; however, his position on the rude, the primitive, and the passionate are central themes in his essay on civil society and return this conversation to the ground of monologic conviction and a form of civic dialogue that resonates with the local, as suggested by Ferguson's essay.

Ferguson's Continual Return

To place in context the importance of Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, I situate the historical moment and the life of the author and then turn to his *Essay*. Ferguson's contribution cannot be separated from his responsive engagement with his historical circumstances. The Cambridge 1995 edition of this classic volume begins with an important sketch of the author's life. Ferguson was born on the border between the Scottish lowlands and highlands in 1723. His father was a Presbyterian minister. The lowlands had closer ties to England; the highlands were noted for their fierce loyalty to Scotland, worship in the Catholic Church, and a well-defined clan structure (Minahan 2003, 1687–1689). Ferguson, from the time of his youth, encountered Gaelic-speaking clansmen of the north who met existence with a frontier spirit, while the more refined lowlanders aligned more with England and emerging commercialisation.

Ferguson, as a student, was immersed in ancient texts; he had exceptional skill in Greek and Latin. He attended the University of St. Andrews at the age of sixteen.⁵ Upon completing his degree, Ferguson headed to the University of Edinburgh, which was also attended by other future clergy and contributors to the Scottish Enlightenment, such as Hugh Blair (minister and professor, 1718–1800), John Home (minister and playwright, 1722–1808), and William Robertson (minister and eventual principal of the University of Edinburgh, 1721–1793). In the 1740s,

5 The University of St. Andrews was of minimal importance during the Scottish Enlightenment in comparison to the universities at Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. See Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment* (2001: reprinted Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2007), 25–26.

Edinburgh was at a crossroads. It was a place of tension that debated contrasting conceptions of political and national identity. Only sixteen years prior to the birth of Ferguson, in 1707, Scotland joined England in the Union of Parliaments (Oz-Salzberger 1965, vii). From 1707 on, there was no Edinburgh Parliament; this action eclipsed Scottish independence. This political decision was made possible by the 1701 Act of Settlement, which exempted any Roman Catholic from succession to the throne.⁶ Scotland and England had shared the same monarch since 1603.⁷

The tension between the lowlands and the highlands continued over issues of political identity. The highlands supported the last of the Catholic monarchies, the Stuarts. The political wing of this support rested within Jacobitism, a political movement that sought to place a Catholic Stuart on the Scottish throne. The last Catholic King was James II, deposed in 1688. The Jacobite movement founded its name on the Latin for James, *Jacobus* (Black 1993, 11). This struggle continued and was at its peak in the mid-1740s. In 1745, Prince Charles Edward Stuart came from France and attempted an armed rebellion. His campaign failed miserably due to the fact that many in the lowlands had much to lose; their futures were now tied to an ongoing relationship between England and Scotland. Even some of the highlanders were ambivalent and were clearly not well organised in their military opposition to England. The Union of the Crowns in 1603, the Act of 1701, and the collective parliament of 1707 had placed in motion a movement within history that seemed unstoppable, particularly as Scots found increasing economic benefits tied to England (Panton 2011, 485–86). The events of the 1745 rebellion found increasing life in the fictional ‘nostalgic narrations’ of Sir Walter Scott, with others connected to Enlightenment thinking as examples of universal themes of advancement within the human condition (Ol-Salzberger 1965, ix). Yet this sentiment of Enlightenment progress did not totally dominate the Scottish landscape; even the best Enlightenment minds were ‘haunted’ by a ‘particular cultural sensitivity’ that laws, agreements, and Acts between Scotland and England could not eradicate (Ol-Salzberger 1965, ix). The notion of ‘sentiment’ was a central action metaphor in the Scottish Enlightenment, witnessed in the importance of

6 The Stuart dynasty came to the throne after the Tudor Elizabeth I. The first Stuart King, James I, ruled from 1603 to 1625, and the last, Charles I, reigned from 1625 until 1649. The Stuarts supported Catholicism, engendering strong resistance to ‘the designs of Stuart kings’ that resulted in a rebellion that began in 1640 and ended with the execution of Charles I in 1649. John Barber, *Modern European History* New York: Harper Collins, 2011, 11.

7 In the early morning of March 24th, 1603, Queen Elizabeth I of England died. Following her death, James VI, King of Scotland, was proclaimed King James I of England, resulting in a union of crowns on March 31st, 1603. See Jenny Wormald, ‘O Brave New World? The Union of England and Scotland in 1603,’ in *Anglo-Scottish Relations from 1603 to 1900*, T. C. Smout (ed.) (2005) New York: Oxford University Press, 14.

their attachment to local soil and Scottish traditions. Ferguson's initial steps into professional life kept him exceptionally familiar with the power of sentiment.

Concluding his education in 1745 (the year of the rebellion), Ferguson was quickly ordained, which led to his appointment as chaplain of the highland regiment, the Black Watch, who aligned with the British and fought the French at the battle of Fontenoy in Flanders.⁸ There is debate as to whether or not Ferguson was actually at this battle, but the sentiment of his appreciation for the military and his recognition of where the future of Scotland rested is registered in the stories of his military escapades. Ferguson remained in the military for nine years; without question, he understood 'military valour as a cornerstone of civic virtue' (Oz-Salzberger 1965, x). Additionally, his knowledge of ancient Greek life placed him in greater agreement with Sparta than with Athens.

After Ferguson resigned his post, he remained on the continent for more than a year. Ferguson considered the Saxon⁹ nobility 'pompous' (Oz-Salzberger 1965, x). He returned to Scotland in 1746. He then became friends with David Hume and Adam Smith and understood their Scottish Enlightenment thinking as being distinctive from that of France. However, Ferguson dismissed some of the lowlander criticism of Hume and Smith and contended that the highlanders had a sentiment that could not and should not be obliterated — they brought something important to the world that was being ignored. Even though Ferguson's essay on civic society addresses the limits of clan structure, '[his] experience began to suggest that the rude clans had effectively preserved values which modern society had, to its detriment, lost' (Oz-Salzberger 1965, xi). Ferguson was one of the few who defended the play *Douglas*, which was written by John Home in 1757. The play was considered provincial primitivism; critics offered open statements that the drama fell eternally

8 The Battle of Fontenoy (May 11th, 1745) was a battle fought in Flanders during the War of Austrian Succession. The Franco-Irish brigade won a notable victory over the British and Dutch such that the battle has been celebrated historically for its success. The role of the Irish Brigade 'has been regarded as the greatest of Irish battle honours.' See Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds.) (1997), *A Military History of Ireland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 299.

9 The term 'Saxon' describes Germanic peoples in ancient times who migrated extensively through northern Germany and Britain. The term Saxony was particularly used as a name for the north of Germany. The Saxons are thought to have originated in the area of the modern Schleswig-Holstein as far as the Rivers Warnow and Elbe and on the Baltic coast. They were eventually absorbed into the Frankish Empire under the policies of Charlemagne. D. H. Green, Introduction to *The Continental Saxons from the Migration Period to the Tenth Century*, Dennis Howard Green and Frank Siegmund (eds.) (2003), Martlesham, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1–12; J. H. Hines, 'The Conversion of the Old Saxons,' *Ibid.*, 299.

short of a Shakespearean production. Ferguson, on the other hand, stated that too many in Scotland worked from an inferiority complex, when, ironically, Scotland was one of the best-educated countries in Europe.¹⁰ Ferguson went further with this local sentiment in his defence of James McPherson, who asserted that he was the discoverer and translator of the poetry of a 'mythical Celtic bard, Ossian' (Oz-Salzberger 1965, xi). McPherson's work was later termed fraudulent.¹¹

Ferguson's sentiment for the local soil was present in his insistence that Scotland have its own military. However, after the 1745 rebellion, this possibility was no longer considered feasible from the perspective of England. There was too much suspicion that Jacobitism lay dormant, waiting to rise once again. Ferguson continued to pursue the importance of a Scottish military. He founded the 'Poker Club' in 1762, which pushed the military question that he framed in *Reflections Previous in the Establishment of a Militia* (1756), which connected military service to public civil commitments. Ferguson, unlike Hume and Smith, did not accept that 'economic progress, social refinement, and a well-balanced constitution' could substitute for 'virtuous citizen soldiers' (Oz-Salzberger 1965, xiv). Ferguson refused to ignore the creative importance of local conviction. He was considered by some to be the most Machiavellian of the Scottish thinkers (Pocock 1975, 498–501). Marco Geuna contends that, although Ferguson was described by George Davie and John Pocock as having Machiavellian tendencies due to 'conceptual distinctions typical of natural jurisprudence' (as seen in his political pamphlets), his thought belongs to 'the republican tradition' (Geuna 2002, 181). His perspective was not that of science, but of the protection of the civic centre of power and influence. He was practically and philosophically indebted to the classical republicanism of Rome and Cicero. In his own historical moment, Ferguson used the language of Andrew Fletcher,¹² who

10 Rab Houston stated in his analysis of Scottish literacy (which covers 1630–1760) that Scotland could claim to be one of the best educated countries at the time among its contemporaries, probably on a par with Holland and northern England. The literacy rate was notably high among landowners and professional men and in urban areas. Rab Houston, 'The Literacy Myth? Illiteracy in Scotland, 1630–1760,' in Graff, H.J. (ed.) (2007) *Literacy and Historical Development: A Reader*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 183–204.

11 James MacPherson (1736–1796) was thought to have discovered and translated the poetry of Ossian, although it was later shown that the poems were MacPherson's compositions. The poetry caught the 'imagination of all of Europe.' MacLean, Charles, and Sykes, Christopher Symon, (1992) *Scottish Country*, New York: Clarkson Potter. 93.

12 Andrew Fletcher (1653–1716) of Saltoun is credited with leading 'Scottish political debate in the 1690s, just as the crisis which was to culminate in the union broke upon the country.' He is described as a 'militant republican' who alarmed his countrymen and garnered their respect by his 'passionate intelligence for Scotland's predicament.' Robertson, John, 'The Scottish Enlightenment at the Limits of the Civic Tradition,' in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (eds.) (1983) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 141–43.

fought tirelessly against the Union of the Parliaments in 1707. Ferguson was not opposed to the union, but he also appreciated the language of civic duty that was connected to local soil. Ferguson had an affinity with the Stoics and with Sparta. He was drawn to their austerity and discipline. Ferguson's *Essay* was applauded by many, including Voltaire, and was used in universities throughout the world. Hume, a significant friend of Ferguson, on the other hand, disapproved of the manuscript; perhaps considering Ferguson's thinking 'too 'Scottish' both in spirit and terminology' (Oz-Salzberger 1965, xvii). Ferguson's *Essay* was a form of dissent that moved away from the scientific spirit of Hume and Smith. He wanted to reclaim the republican tradition of local civic life.

Unlike his Scottish Enlightenment thinker contemporaries, Ferguson contended that developing countries were consistently in 'clear and near danger of retreating into barbarian despotism'; Ferguson was not a blind and unashful proponent of progress — his position was indeterminate (Oz-Salzberger 1965, xx). Ferguson contended that changes and shifts could occur at any moment. His conception of civic life and history resisted the mantra of the inevitable march toward progress. Ferguson had little appreciation for 'historical determinism.' Life and historical directions change quickly, requiring citizens to be ever vigilant — one cannot assume uninterrupted success. He recognised that the emerging emphasis on division of labour had both benefits and liabilities and understood its development within commerce. However, he did not want to separate the roles of the citizen and the military; such a division of labour puts at risk the performative heart and soul of a people. Ferguson was enamored with the importance of 'responsible amateurs' in all aspects of civic life (Oz-Salzberger 1965, xxii).

Ferguson supported a modern economy as long as classical republicanism was grounded in everyday civic life. He understood the importance of small groups, working in responsive engagement with, and for, a larger common good. In the *Essay*, Ferguson's engagement of conjectural history acts as a hermeneutic orientation that guides his discussion of civic society. The term is now primarily associated with Ferguson, who brought a populist sentiment to his conception of civic life.¹³ Ferguson included all people, with his appreciation resting most prominently on those who produce labour and effort to assist the common good. He understood the emerging reliance on a division of labour, which he embraced with considerable

13 Some scholars cite Ferguson as having a populist sentiment, but Iain McDaniel (2013, 40) says: 'Ferguson feared that the politics of the 1760s disguised an underlying tendency toward a centralised, but populist, model of commercial monarchy. From this perspective, Ferguson attached the dangerous 'Athenian' combination of commerce, empire, and the democratic politics of Britain, which he may have associated with the populist vision of patriotic monarchy set out in Lord Bolingbroke's *Patriot King*.'

scepticism. 'As Karl Marx was quick to note, Ferguson (along with Adam Smith) was also one of the first authors to recognise the benefits and dangers of the division of labour' (Oz-Salzberger 1965, xxi). Ferguson met the world before him, recognising its existential importance without falling victim to claims masked under the guise of progress.

Ferguson's writing style was considered to be Scottish, moral, and reflective of the stoic image of a 'Scottish Cato' (Oz-Salzberger 1965, xxiv). He did not write from a pillar of objectivity, but from a passionate commitment to a classical republican world of civic life that was demanded of a citizen. I understand *An Essay on the History of Civic Society* as an explication of change that does not ignore the monologic narratives that historically guided the Scottish people in their participation in a commercial society. Ferguson considered the monologic ground of the local as the substance that offered a corrective to commercialisation.

The Essay

Ferguson (1965) distinguishes his project from that of a natural historian. He openly details the importance of conjectural history. Progress and the goal of improvement are reset as he describes the move from animal instincts to an increasing commitment to sociality; the doing of conjectural history permits one to enter into conversation about such change and social movements — engaging history from a stance of considered implications for future developments and concerns. Ferguson's conception of conjectural history presupposed that the aspirations of a people/society are only possible when one seeks to meet and understand current conditions and abides by a standard of evaluation beyond one's immediate impulses, which he ties to what he termed the common good. Ferguson suggests that the clan clings and fights together, but the modern commercial person has little of such loyalty, resulting in a 'solitary' and 'detached' person (Ibid, 24). Ferguson reminds the reader of the vitality within places and persons of conviction. The unity of persons in society often emerges as a byproduct of a response to hostility from an outside force, or from a loyalty to local soil. He wants to lessen the limits of the clan and simultaneously acknowledge the importance of loyalty in sociality.

There is the possibility of genius in persons and nations. However, as one makes such an evaluation, one must consider the 'fortune' within which another functions before offering that person undue 'respect.' One must attend to the circumstances in which thought transpires and for genuine creativity to occur, one must understand and assemble the 'particulars' before rendering judgment (Ferguson 1965, 30–31). For Ferguson (1965), judgment of another's exertion and personal effort is often a better indicator than success that is propelled by fortunate circumstances; one cannot confuse the good work of another with good fortune at a given moment.

[In] the admired precincts of a court, where we may learn to smile without being pleased, to caress without affection, to wound with the secret weapons of envy and jealousy, and to rest our personal importance on circumstances which we cannot always with honour command? No: but in a situation where the great sentiments of the heart are awakened; where the characters of men, not their situations and fortunes, are the principal distinction; where the anxieties of interest, or vanity, perish in the blaze of more vigorous emotions; and where the human soul...[cannot] leave its talents and its force unemployed. (Ibid, 42–43)

Danger comes to civic life when one sells one's freedom for career or political advancement that results in the sociality of a smile that actually masks the practice of meanness of heart. Happiness that is propelled by 'animal instincts' alone seeks immediate gratification. Yet, the construction of anything worthwhile requires considerable time and effort. In building, one finds happiness, which seems to arise more from 'pursuit' than from 'repose' (Ibid, 46–47). Additionally, happiness derives from a community, as one practices living together with a suppressed pettiness towards the other. Jealousy and envy put communities at risk. The Greeks and Romans privileged the public over the individual, requiring one to find a sense of happiness within the public domain (Ibid, 57). Ferguson, like the Greeks and Romans, did not equate creativity and public happiness with individual amusement and lack of demand; happiness emerges from toil that pursues the public good and the enrichment of the community. His vision of community includes the Spartan legislator, who never shied away from the interplay of loyalty and 'dissent' (Ibid, 57). The good rests in what is best for the public and the community, not in or for an individual self. For Ferguson, the ideal legislator does not rise from the 'multitudes' or function as a 'tyrant,' but rather advances as a citizen who speaks with candour in the hope of assisting the good of 'his fellow creatures' (Ibid, 73).

Ferguson (1965) contended that one had to understand past nations and people in order to comprehend the significance of the present. The value of fables and stories about the past, as well as the insights of historians such as Thucydides, is their framing of events capable of illuminating one's own era. In his contemporary moment of the mid-eighteenth century, Ferguson referred to America as a 'rude' territory where 'fortitude' did not equate with meeting the enemy face to face in battle. It was a place where engaging in acts of trickery and abuse met with success (Ibid, 73). He did not conceive of these acts as civilised, but cautioned his readers that such actions are ignored at one's own peril; such behaviour emanates from such a people's passion and energy. Ferguson discussed how rude nations have little disparity in rank; their warriors are willing to die rather than to be captured. Their property is protected in a web of relations and friendship, not by the abstraction of public law. Ferguson asserted that rude nations are governed more by sentiment

than abstract logic. Ferguson suggested that civilised nations require a shore with water and natural boundaries; mountain ranges protect them from invasion. Additionally, a civil society can flourish in severe climates and with adversaries who mandate engagement and creative adaptation. Adversity sustains passion and creativity from necessity.

The passion of what he termed a barbarian is directed by, or 'subordinated' to the community. Following the stress on passion, the origin of a civil society cannot rest with the power of a single person; such influence emerges from agreements generated by, and negotiated between and among those who coordinate public life together. A civil society cannot rest with the power of one; a public commitment requires a unified, pragmatic desire to cooperate for mutual gain. Yet, it is ironical that civil groups are, at times, defended by the passion of a single person who is willing to sacrifice for the communal good. Ferguson asserted that people have a greater or lesser interest in the affairs of the State, depending on their 'proportion' of involvement and their 'share' in the direction of a government, which nourishes the development of a civil society and its charge to protect both the self and the other. Rude nations work in small bands to preserve one another. As population and wealth increase, concern for the individual begins to triumph. If we forget our obligation to one another, we 'cut off the roots' that extend the likelihood of collective prosperity (Ibid, 141). Rude nations define themselves by war. A civil society, on the other hand, must prepare for war without ignoring the safety of its neighbours, which lessens the likelihood of war. The interests of a people reasonably require concern for its neighbours (Ibid, 149). Ferguson framed a pragmatic rationale that testifies to a pragmatic concern for the other; the safety of the other ultimately ensures one's own safety. At the same time, one must be willing to struggle if the expansive interests of another threaten one's own sovereignty.

With the reality of constant war, one puts at risk the long term interests of a people and a nation; short term successes hasten decline (Ferguson 1965, 148). The power of civic liberty rests with transparency and is diametrically opposed to secrets that curtail long-term interests. Ferguson's conception of the history of the arts has a similar concern for the neighbour and a desire to limit the secrets between the self and the other as one attends to the generations of civilisations, not simply to one's own. Ferguson (1965, 171) stated that the Romans were able to listen to the insights of the Greeks because they were open to future implications, not just to the commemoration of antiquity. Creativity builds upon that which we know, permitting us to continue the conversation in multiple ways. Creativity, literature, and art emerge from the inspiration that arises from an active life with others and with nature *and* in response to previous writings that reflect the sentiment of another people that must be met with 'fortitude and public affection'.

With increasing reliance upon commercial exchange, one finds productive skills with the land and animals giving way to those that produce and consume commercial goods. Ferguson (1965, 175) stated that if one engages in inappropriate nostalgic reflections, one will dismiss those who are more 'idle' and apparently less 'busy'. One cannot confuse the constant frenzy of activity with communal health. Unrestrained commercial striving separates persons from one another, moving people far from the impulses of a rude nation, where one still knows the genuine value of a friend and one embraces zeal in one's heart for the 'public interest' (Ibid, 178). In what Ferguson called rude states, there is a singular pursuit of the public interest. However, in what he termed 'civilised' states, there are increasing numbers of diverse concentrations. The stress on individuality without shared sacrifice in a 'civilised' country invites weakness within a heart. It is the infusion of love for the neighbour and the 'ferocity of spirit' for the common good that brings health to a community; romantic visions that assert politeness and manners constitute a fable that cannot actually protect a people (Ibid, 192). Fables about individual interest alone accompany the decline of nations. An individual focus invites 'the sources of internal decay, and the ruinous corruptions to which nations are liable, in the supposed condition of accomplished civility' (Ibid, 199).

Participation in the public development of a place and of a people is essential if one seeks to encourage sentiment that is attentive to local public interests. Ferguson (1965, 213) called for institutions that generated courage through the fortitude of the mind and a commitment to national good. He contended that such characteristics 'can never tend to national ruin'. Nations cannot live by reason and individual concern alone. At times, sacrifice is demanded for the public interest.

The public key to communal strength is a commitment to public interest and a courage that dissuades one from becoming lost in commercial interests alone. Returns on foreign involvement should contribute to the public interest and not weaken a given people; otherwise, they lead to 'national ruin' (Ferguson 1965, 223). Courage tied to public interest requires resistance to war, unless such action is the last option available for the protection of public interests.

Additionally, political corruption diminishes the scope of the public domain when one asserts that only those who contribute directly to commercial success are valuable contributors. Such a perspective misses the vital importance of music, art, and leisure in the formation of a healthy public domain. Corruption also emerges in milieus of extreme 'luxury' (Ferguson 1965, 235). Luxury becomes yet another form of monarchical subordination that can weaken democracies, lessening the emphasis on personal qualities. Ferguson states that sloth, unchecked pleasure, and abundant leisure lead to communal decline and also to personal disappointment. For 'polished nations,' commercialism ultimately leads to a return to 'despotism'

(1965, 257). Ferguson ends by stating that nations fall into ruin when ‘internal vice’ is greater than the fortitude of persons (Ibid, 257). Civic society requires sacrifice for the greater good, for the public interest, understood within a public domain that is composed of differing perspectives and opinions.

Implications for Civic Dialogue

I conclude with the implications of Ferguson’s project for civic dialogue and thereby the inclusion of monologue as the narrative ground that shapes one’s identity. For clarity, I will enumerate five points from Ferguson, connecting each to research on dialogue.

1. *Public*. Ferguson framed a conception of the public that embraced the vitality of disagreement and dissent. His perspective was akin to Hannah Arendt’s understanding of the public domain: as a dwelling composed of multiple opinions with ‘interspaces’ of distance that maintain the integrity of ideas and persons (Arendt 1958, 31).
2. *Public Interest*. Ferguson stressed the common good and the dangers of rampant individualism and commercialism. His view of the public interest is akin to Martin Buber’s (1958) definition of community that is nourished by a common centre, not simply by relational ties. Emmanuel Levinas (1982, 85) stated that one must care for another without attending to the colour of his or her eyes. Something more penultimate than likeability and friendship must drive an ethic of public interest. Ferguson’s conception of the public interest included a common centre that does not require uniform agreement; dissent matters in acts of concern for others. It is a view that goes against the pursuit of individualism that is so evident in our modern society.
3. *Limits of Commercial Life*. Ferguson understood the growing significance of commercial exchange. He emphasised, however, that only at one’s own peril does one forget the world of persons, loyalties, and local soil. Such goods cannot be eclipsed through social advocacy that highlights only individual progress and success while eclipsing the thought that a community is actually worthy of sacrifice. A community of solitary commercial success moves life in a horizontal direction, missing the vertical depth of family and friends. Not all communities are worthy of support, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated: “‘The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an individual and to a community the better for both...Sooner or later it [a community not worth supporting] will collapse’ (1954, 27). Sacrifice and concern for the community emerges from local soil and known persons, but when a community is torn

asunder by commercial greed, support must naturally cease.

4. *A Call for a Citizen-Military.* Ferguson worried that a professional army would lose two important features: first, the performative characteristics of shared sacrifice and, second, the communal sentiment that arises from common suffering that can challenge unneeded military ventures. Hannah Arendt's classic contention is that 'thoughtlessness' is consistent with Ferguson's argument. Arendt, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, argued repeatedly that thoughtless engagement with existence culminates in a banality of evil: 'He [Eichmann] was not stupid. It was sheer thoughtlessness — something by no means identical with stupidity ... This 'banal' ... Seemingly more complicated ... than examining the strange interdependence of thoughtlessness and evil, is the question of what kind of crime is actually involved here — a crime, moreover, which all agree is unprecedented' (1965, 288). Ferguson called for military participation as a direct counter to thoughtlessness. People die in war. Families must hold governments accountable for decisions that result in military ventures. The risks are personal, keeping the thoughtful critique of governmental action at the forefront of discussion. The reality of family and friends under the threat of war and death can shift one's critical assessment of military engagement. A critical consciousness often emerges when there is something we consider worthy of our sacrifice. Ferguson demanded a citizen-military that is naturally attentive to sacrifices called forth by the state. He wanted reflective deliberation on all demands from the state. A professional military can de-privilege a critical consciousness that questions the need for such sacrifice when the risk is assumed by a distant and unknown other. Ferguson called for a citizen military in order to hold the government accountable.
5. *Limits of a Smile.* Ferguson was enamoured with the 'rude' as a tempering factor for the 'civilised.' He lamented the smile that cloaks an evil heart. The veneer of manners can lead to unexpected social damage. The problematic nature of such a person is considered in *Dialogic Education* with a critique of the 'managed smile' (Arnett 1992). Ferguson might suggest that we follow the performative actions of others, not their efforts at self-presentation.

The Scottish Enlightenment finds its most tenacious spokesperson for the local and the provincial in the voice of Adam Ferguson. Civic dialogue is not abstract, but is fundamental to the people in a real town, city, or in the countryside. Such dialogue walks within the sentiments of a given people; their convictions matter — the monologic character of their lives matters. Civic dialogue understands the

importance of monologic conviction. We must seek to learn about one another; such initial knowledge invites a communicative environment where change and reconsideration are possible.

Monologue does not clench truth in its fist, but it houses sentiment that shapes our identity and demands attention from another. Civic dialogue begins with a respectful honouring of what matters to another. Ferguson points to six dialogic reminders that have implications for understanding monologue as the creative fulcrum of dialogic invitation. First, Ferguson recognises the performativity of the public domain, which involves one's own opinion and that of contrasting voices. Multiple opinions, as understood by Arendt, constitute the public domain. Opinions of conviction are monologic markers that must be taken seriously via understanding, not necessarily via agreement. Second, Ferguson suggests that the public domain requires that we work with those whom we do not like, acknowledging a public common centre that is larger than oneself. Civic dialogue requires an understanding of the monologic ground of conviction that matters to another, whether or not we like a given person. Understanding must trump affinity. Third, commercial life necessitates supporting, within the public domain, art, music, and literature as elements of a tempering communal hope. Annette Holba's recent books on leisure explicate this position well (Holba 2007; 2013). Ferguson and Holba suggest the pragmatic importance of the arts in sustaining the human spirit and keeping the hope of civic dialogue viable. Fourth, Ferguson's call for committed amateurs extends well beyond the military complex, reminding us that the division of labour offers efficiency at a high price. The differentiation of roles in professional life is akin to an industrial era foreman (Ginsberg 2011). Fifth, Ferguson's suggestion that smiling that is tied to self-presentation cannot be confused with the spontaneous welcome of good will, and the delight of discovery, suggests that civic dialogue begins not with nice people, but with people willing to learn about what matters to the other. Finally, Ferguson suggested that there is a creative power associated with the rude, the raw, and the unsophisticated person who cares about the importance of friendship and others and is willing to sacrifice for them.

Civic dialogue demands that we understand what matters to another. Respecting persons of conviction can bind us together, even during times of dispute. If you have ever known such a person, you understand Ferguson's cry to honour the values of the highlands. In his historical moment, Ferguson understood the importance of such commitments to the soul of a Scot, which were and are a necessary tempering of a commercial society. In a commercial society, where the depth of friendship and family wanes and one is suddenly awaked in a stupor, a state between sleep and wakefulness, one is seemingly invaded by an existential question, 'Is this all there is?' The answer for Ferguson was 'no.' When civic dialogue embraces a depth of

conviction, persons and practices matter; from a monologic home of conviction, one finds a 'why' for service to the public domain that trumps the modern mantra of commercial and individual success alone. People and human faces matter. Success that pivots away from the depth of human commitments moves communities into decline and individual life into commercial despair. Ferguson's role was to offer heart to a commercial world void of commitments that keep meaning at the centre of the human condition. Civic dialogue begins with acknowledgment of the monologic conviction of another. Dialogue commences with what matters to one another.

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