Deliberative Democracy and the Corruption of Speech*

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This paper is motivated by an apparent paradox: in the developed democracies, the public discourse of political corruption remains stubbornly pervasive, in spite of the fact that these countries are, comparatively, the cleanest in the world. In these countries, everyday talk about corruption expresses a politics of suspicion and distrust that reflects disaffection from politics, corrodes deliberative responses to political conflict, and—alarmingly—can be mobilized by populist authoritarians. I shall argue, however, that the paradoxical strength of corruption discourse in relatively clean countries depends upon an everyday intuition that powers of language that enable social cooperation. This intuition is expressed, negatively, in the discourse of "corruption." From this perspective, the discourse also highlights the kinds of care a deliberative democracy must put into protecting the powers of speech, its defining resource, as well as the kinds of trust that enable these powers. Deliberative democratic systems might be conceived as those that hedge against the corruption of speech.

1. *The problem: the persistence of the discourse of corruption*

Of the cleanest 30 or so countries listed in the 2010 Corruption Perception Index, almost all are relatively wealthy democracies located in Europe, North America, and Australia-Asia. The exceptions are a handful of very small, business-oriented autocracies such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Qatar. The United States, which is ranked 22nd out of 154 countries on the 2010 survey, is not the cleanest of democracies, but it groups with other large economic powers, including Germany, France, Japan, and the UK. Canada is ranked 6th,and groups with smaller powers, including Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, and Denmark. There are huge differences between these countries, in which a citizen will rarely if ever encounter a corrupt demand or transaction, and countries such as Russia, Paraguay, or Nigeria, where corruption is endemic to institutions and affects the everyday life of citizens in ways both material and moral (Transparency International 2010, Rose-Ackerman 1999).

But ask Americans (or to a lesser extent, Canadians or Swedes) whether politics in their countries are "corrupt", and chances are that the answer will be "yes." Indeed, if we were to go on public opinion alone, we might judge these relatively clean democracies as among the most corrupt in the world. In the US, for example, charges of "corruption" regularly appear in the in editorials and commentary, not simply on the populist fringes, but in the mainstream media, such as the *New York Times*. Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared Congress as "swamp of corruption," under the Republicans; for their part, Republicans have latched onto the semi-lewd photos tweeted by Democratic congressman Anthony Weiner more as evidence that the Democrats in Congress are no less "corrupt," in spite of the fact that, however unseemly, these acts have little to do with the abuse of public office for private gain (Halbfinger 2011). Public opinion surveys regularly show that much of the public—sometimes a majority in the US—regards "politics" and "most politicians" as "corrupt". In 2008, 51% responding to an American National Election Studies survey believed that "quite a few" politicians are "crooked" (American

National Election Studies 2010, Bok 1978, 184-185). These kinds of indicators align with broader diagnoses: that democracies today function within a pervasive climate of popular distrust of governments generally, and politicians in particular (Rosanvallon 2008)

Political scientists tend to view these findings as evidence of disaffection from politics generally, rather than any particular pathology that could be addressed through institutional change, reform, transparency, or other fixes. Analysts also explain these perceptions by pointing out that as instances of political corruption become rarer—as they certainly are in the US as compared to, say, a century or even 40 years ago,—each instance gains more attention from the media, thus producing the impression that corruption is, in fact, wide-spread. And, finally, it is true that while the kinds of corruption that attract attention from Transparency International are relatively limited in the developed democracies, much of politics is conducted non-transparently, out of the public eye, and often involving exchanges of favours such as campaign support (Johnston 2005, Chap. 4).

Without denying any of these factors, in this paper I pursue a very different kind of possibility by taking the everyday discourse of corruption at face value. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index compiles, in their words, "surveys and assessments used to compile the index include questions relating to bribery of public officials, kickbacks in public procurement, embezzlement of public funds, and questions that probe the strength and effectiveness of public sector anti-corruption efforts." (Transparency International 2010) Here I investigate the possibility that the everyday discourse of corruption is not about these senses of corruption at all, but rather about the ways language is used in politics, particularly by elected representatives. Here I theorize the possibility that the discourse of corruption is about the corruption of discourse.

In some ways, the topic has an old-fashioned feel about it. Thucydides complained that in corrupt Athens, men were so ridden with "ambition, envy, greed, and lust for power" that they became "oblivious to the importunements of justice, honor, mercy, and 'common laws … to which all alike can appeal for salvation should they be overtaken by adversity'." Used strategically to further individual gains, "'[w]ords were forced to change their ordinary meaning'" (Euben 1989, quoting from Thucydides, 224-225) to such an extent that public deliberation lost its force. (Euben 1989, 224-225, M. E. Warren 2004, 339). The trouble in Athens was that, in a polity built on the powers of speech, the very medium of speaking was losing its referents—to right and wrong, to truthfulness and insincerity, to fact and error. Under these circumstances, deliberative politics becomes impossible.

The old-fashioned feel notwithstanding, there is a highly contemporary dimension to Thucydides' concern. Whereas Transparency International focuses on actionable abuses of public office for private gain, the contemporary discourse of corruption is focused on language use in democratic systems that valorize speech. Corruption in Thucydides' sense has, as its object, speech in a very particular sense:

speech used to reference facts, norms, and intentions that can and should be the objects of claims, such that conflicts can be mediated in relation to them. This is what a *deliberative* democracy does. Thus we must ask (in way that corruption professionals do not): What are people saying when they accuse, generally, politicians of dissimulating or lying? What are they implying when they accuse politicians of speaking hypocritically or double-talking? What does it mean when people accuse politicians of being "insincere," and devote more attention than warranted by the issues to the facts about the personal lives of politicians that reveal "character"? Why are "promises" so important that George Bush senior likely lost the 1992 US presidential election over the breaking of a promise utter during the campaign of 1988 ("read my lips, no new taxes"), a promise that responsibility to fiscal realities required him to break? And why does CNN's Anderson Cooper have a whole segment devoted to "Keeping Them Honest"?

So this paper takes the discourse of corruption in contemporary democracies at face value, in spite of its (typical) lack of referents to Transparency International conceptions of corruption. What is behind such phenomenon, I want to argue, is an intuition into the centrality of speech-based commitment in democratic politics generally, and in deliberative democracy in particular. The political penalty for misdiagnosing this sense of corruption is that the norms implied in them are not addressed by democratic process, leaving a window for authoritarian populism. The norms of commitment become free, as it were, for political strategies that promises to anchor meanings outside of politics—in religion, tradition, honour, or character—short-circuiting commitments that follow from deliberation in favour of those based on extra-political authority.

I proceed as follows: in section two, I frame the problem by pointing to the priority of language use in democracy over other kinds of media of conflict resolution and collective organization—coercion, money, and tradition. In the third section, I detail the hazards to which language use is subject within the domain of "the political," which brings with it conflicts of interest and distrust against the background of decisions, backed the powers and resources of adversaries. These features of "politics" disrupt the interpersonal commitments embedded in language use upon which the forces of deliberation depend. These disruptions are the referents of the discourse of "corruption," or so I shall argue. In the fourth section I note, following Thucydides and with particular reference to Plato and Hobbes, that this particular problem of corruption is long-standing. I also argue that canonical responses to this sense of corruption go astray owing to mistaken philosophies of language. The mistakes are not benign: they cause us to give up on the powers of language as a means of conducting politics, and, in consequence, they lead away from democracy and toward authoritarian responses to corrupt discourse—an instinct evidence in contemporary populist discourses of corruption. In the section five, however, I note that the particular hazard to which the deliberative elements of democratic is *deceit*. Where language bears the burden of conflict resolution, deceit is the form in which coercion is packaged. This element of deliberative democracy helps to explain the stubbornness of the discourse of corruption—as well as why

deliberative democrats should take this stubbornness as diagnostic of the fundamental role that language-based commitments play in deliberative politics. In section six, I turn to alternative philosophies of language use: those of Arendt, Habermas, and Brandom. The key point to be derived from these approaches is that language use accomplishes a great deal of social work—in particular, every speaker (as a social actor) leaves a trail of commitments, obligations, and responsibilities upon which other speakers/actors rely in the construction of social solidity. In section seven, I elaborate this point with an examination of the difference between promising and trusting: promises are exacted with the implied commitments of speech are weak; when speech is working, it underwrites trust, the essential feature of a society that provides it members with existential security. The points elaborated in sections six and seven enable a more exacting way to identify what is corrupted when political speech loses its moorings: it is these (intersubjective) commitments that are corrupted (section eight). And yet it is precisely these commitments that enable politics to be conducted through the medium of speech. It is this intuition, I am arguing, that is embedded in the everyday discourse of political corruption. It follows that as long as this intuition remains alive within political culture, the discourse of corruption will remain persistent even in the "clean" democracies. In section nine I offer a conception of deliberative democratic system as one that hedges against the corruption of speech. This conception does not compete with current approaches to deliberative democracy. Rather, it layers a new set of reasons to prefer deliberative politics, provides another way of appreciating the challenges to which deliberation is subject, and identifies hazards to which deliberative institutions should respond.

2. *The priority of talk in democracy*

The key norm of democracy is simple and compelling: those who are affected by collective decisions should be entitled to be included in making those decisions. Democratic systems empower inclusions—always imperfectly—by distributing entitlements that work as empowerments for those with (legitimate) claims to inclusion. These include protections from domination, direct empowerments such votes, rights to organize, speak, pressure and lobby, as well as indirect empowerments that underwrite citizen capacities such as education and basic income. *Deliberative* democracy adds a second, equally simple and compelling proposition. Collective decisions, especially those that are contentious, are best made through *talk* rather than through coercion, money-based incentives, or the authority of tradition or persons.

The structural features of democracy tend to incentivize talk-based politics. One consequence of combining entitlements for inclusion with protections against coercion or economic blackmail is that everyone so empowered is *also* a potential veto-player who must now be *persuaded* to come to the table. So democracies "naturally" produce relatively noisy polities with pluralistic public spheres full of

advocacy groups and media, and institutions with multiple spaces for talk—framing, posturing, arguing, persuading, bargaining, negotiating, and deliberating.

A related (and fundamental) claim of deliberative democratic theory is that *if* talk is doing political work—as it must, once other resources of collective-decision-making are limited and widely distributed—then the decisions that result borrow, as it were, from the powers of speech itself. The relevant powers are "deliberative": they involve the offering and receiving of claims in such a way that participants are influenced by the content of claims. Ideally, decisions that follow from deliberation in this sense are better in at least four ways. They are better epistemologically, because decisions are the result of more information and more perspectives (Estlund 2008). They are better ethically, because they are more likely to have taken into account the generalized interests and perspectives of those who are affected, thus tending toward rules that are just (J. Habermas 1996, Chap. 4, Rawls 1993, Lecture VI). They more likely to enable the autonomy of citizens, both individually and collectively, in the sense that they reflect what citizens would decide for themselves. Finally, they are more likely to be politically legitimate: those who have had their say and who have opened themselves to the persuasion of others are also more likely to willingly assent to a collective decision, and to do so for reasons that they understand and might even consider their own (see also (Gutmann 2004, 10-13).

3. The problem: language use under conditions of politics

These are all now basic and widely held ideas within deliberative democratic theory. Less theoretical has been paid to the kinds of securities people need to invest trust in deliberative approaches to political problems, particularly as compared to the other resources they might deploy, such as coercion, economic inducement, or reliance on traditional authorities. Why would people invest in the apparent uncertainties of deliberation?

One kind of answer focuses on securities provided by settled law, including those that establish rights-based protections (Rawls 1993, J. Habermas 1996, Chap. 1). Here I am interested in a parallel problem, but one that occurs "upstream" of law and policy, within the less settled spaces of "the political": those spaces in which agreements are forged and decisions made under conditions of uncertainty (M. E. Warren 1999). In a well-functioning democracy, language use is protected and enabled as the medium though which political conflicts are identified, framed, addressed, deliberated, and resolved. Well-constructed institutions protect these spaces. But, as agonist democrats rightly note, such institutions, if they are to remain "political," must sublimate rather suppress or eliminate conflict. They transform (in Chantal Mouffe's words) antagonists into agonists (citation). Under these circumstances, words labour under the pall of mistrust, burdened with strategic intent; they swim upstream to do the work of politics. Because political deliberations are often structured around collective decisions that focus an issue

around resource distributions, laws, or policies, they also focus the stakes. Indeed, if nothing were at stake, it would be hard to define the situation as "political". But one consequence is that political circumstances select for *strategic* intent, so that the conditions that individuals might take for granted in the "social" use of deliberation—shared interests in coordinating social action—do not hold. Moreover, speakers may come from different worlds, and there are fewer shared meanings, a characteristic of "political" contexts that is, typically, different from the social contexts that underwrite powers of deliberation. So, the characteristics that speakers should bring into political discourse—recognition, reciprocity, sincerity, and trust in commitments made—are precisely those for which others might sucker them. Deliberation thus generates its very own kind of collective action problems: in particular, rules of recognition and reciprocity, as well as the trust necessary to take people "at their word" are, as it were, collective goods that are not easily achieved under conditions of politics, and yet they comprise collective goods upon which talk-based politics depends for its effectiveness.

Deliberative democratic theory is by no means oblivious to the hazards to talk under conditions of political conflict. In any case, it is not within the powers of deliberative democratic theory to provide guarantees. What theory can do is point to conditions and circumstances that might be advocated or institutionally engineered in ways that help deliberation along. Many deliberative democrats emphasize the moral rules that should regulate deliberation. Rawls, for example, speaks of the burdens of judgment citizens should accept, which principally involve respecting the reasons and reasoning of others (Rawls 1993, Lecture II.2). Gutmann and Thompson develop a powerful and convincing argument that deliberation requires the prior acceptance of the principle of reciprocity (Gutmann 2004, Chap. 3), while Benhabib similarly (and rightly) prioritizes recognition (Benhabib 2002). People should be sincere, treat others with respect, respond to their reasons. They should not use words as insults, as instruments of disrespect and hurt. Even more importantly, they should not lie or dissimulate. Young, Dryzek, and Warren note the importance of greetings and other kinds of manners to establishing a context within which talk is possible and productive (Dryzek 2010, Chap. 4, Young 2000, Chap. 2, M. E. Warren 2006). Dryzek, Young, Garsten and others now emphasize a variety of everyday kinds of speech, including rhetoric and narrative, are as essential to deliberative persuasion as are argumentative formal processes of reason-giving (Garsten 2006, Chap. 6).

These are appropriate responses to the hazards of deliberative politics. They open our conceptions of speech to a variety of argumentative intents; they avoid overly precious views of what counts as "deliberation"; they focus on internal barriers to talk-based politics, and they demand of people just those kinds of characteristics and performances that enables people to speak and respond to others as participants in a common and productive means of conducting political conflict. People can and should respond to others as what Rawls and other refer to as "self-originating sources of claims," which, if they are to have force, also demand responses to the content of the claim. The moral preconditions are, indeed,

recognitions of others—their intrinsic moral worthiness as ends in themselves, and their intrinsic capacities to participate in the common project of deliberative self-government. Reciprocity and respect in the use of speech are also intrinsic norms: if deliberation works, it does so because individuals offer claims and listen to responses, adjusting their speech accordingly. There is more: deliberation depends upon some amount of trust: that others are speaking frankly and sincerely, and that agreements and commitments, once achieved and acknowledged, will be abided. These kinds of trust relationships secure, as it were, the contexts within which the next rounds of conflict can be mediated by deliberation (M. E. Warren 1999).

Without denying the appropriateness of these responses—they are valid, they respond to the multi-layered, multidimensional challenges of conducting politics through talk—here I focus on the burdens under which language labours within political contexts. I do so from the standpoint of what is revealed by the discourse of corruption about what language must accomplish, if it is to do the work of politics. The discourse of corruption reveals, at the very least, the suspicion under which speech works within "the political": the perception that words merely express strategic positions or preferences, that they are used to manipulate, frame, distort, mislead. What the discourse of corruption reveals is a default position—held, probably, by most people even in the best of democracies—that political speech is corrupt speech, and that the integrity we associate with everyday talk is missing from the domain of political interactions. As a consequence, deliberative democracy does battle with an everyday cynicism about the place and importance of speech within politics, as well as an abiding suspicion that, in fact, politics is, and can only be, about interests and powers. The often repeated charge, that deliberative democracy is "ideal" or "utopian," draws its continuing force from this undercurrent of everyday suspicion of political speech, for which there is always sufficient evidence.

And there is yet one final point necessary to frame the question: the corruption of language is a particular hazard for democracy, *just because it is the form of politics that valorizes language use*. The disappointment with language use in a democracy is a sensibility—perhaps even a moral sensibility—that develops along side of a people, a polity, that is learning to accomplish political work through talk. Without this sensibility, there would be little point in speaking of the corruption of language. And so it is this sensibility that we must pursue, lest it be corroded beyond recognition by cynical accounts of political speech.

4. The corruption of language: Plato and Hobbes

This cynicism about language use in politics has a deep history within the canon of political thought, allowing it to pass as worldly wisdom, even profound wisdom, into the nature of politics. The cynicism has two famous origins, one ancient, and the other early modern. Both speak centrally to the corruption of

language, and for both the problem is central to the encompassing problem of political order.

The ancient origin is Plato, and can be found in his suspicion of rhetoric, which is in turn an argument against democracy, and especially against deliberative democracy, if we can say that the use of speech in the Agora counted as a form of "deliberative democracy". Plato's general fear, of course, was that Athens had fallen into a morally corrupt state. The indictment of "deliberative democracy," using the term loosely and in reference to the business of persuasion built by the Sophists, was that it amounted to the use of speech to persuade without any reference to truth.

Plato's fear was focused upon the relationship between social order and language use. If words can mean just anything according to the desires of those who deploy them, then their meanings will desires imposed by the powerful. Words used strategically, to sway the crowds, bypass rational uses of speech—dialectic in particular. The corruption of language evidenced in rhetoric amounted to words cast adrift from their (potential) references, which might anchor their proper use. On this model, "corruption" is, of course, moral in nature. But from the standpoint of language use, "corruption" means that actors use language in a purely strategic way, such that meanings are uncontained and undisciplined by natural referents. There is a deliberative theory in Plato (G. M. Mara 1997)—but what counts as deliberation is speech sheltered from politics—and, in particular, from the powers of persuasion and the ungrounded vagaries of *doxa*. Insofar as the link between politics and speech is severed, so too is the relationship between speech and democracy. My point is not original. But it is worth a reminder, since the theory of language use is essential to the charge that politics corrupts, including the democratic politics that makes use of speech.

The early modern source of the concern with the (political) corruption of language is Hobbes, who views social order as secured by promises, where the content of promises is in turn secured by the proper use of words (Wolin 2004, Chap. 8.VI). As a nominalist, Hobbes' fear was that because there is nothing that naturally anchors the meanings of words, meanings reflect interests and preferences, confusions, or "abuses of speech", including inconstancy in the use of definitions, deceit of others, insincere expressions of will, and injurious speech (Hobbes 1968, Chap. IV). He viewed the risks to order as so central that he would endow (famously) the Sovereign with authority over the meanings of doctrines, which are, ultimately, to be anchored in the right use of words (Hobbes 1968, Chap. XVIII.I.6).

Hobbes is concerned with "corruption" that settles into cognitive judgment, propelled by self-interest. As Adrian Blau puts it, "[c]ognitive corruption is central to Hobbes's account of political order: citizens will obey the sovereign if they reason clearly without being infected by fractious dispositions; otherwise citizens are corrupt. Right reason tells one to prioritise one's real self-interest over short-term

gains." (Blau 2009, 605). In this way, Hobbes turns political speech—manipulative rhetoric in particular—into the primary site of corruption: "a counselor who uses exhortation and dehortation, two key tools of rhetoric, fails to 'tye himselfe . . . to the rigour of true reasoning', producing advice that is 'directed to the Good of him that giveth the Counsell, not of him that asketh it'." (Blau 2009, 607) Such unanchored uses of words—the corrupt use of speech—are, in this way, at the root of political corruption: bribery, sedition, and disorder. Similarly, Terence Ball notes that for Hobbes the state of nature is a condition of communicative breakdown, one in which each individual speaks a private language, each language expressive of subjective worlds of interests, and thus disconnected from social order. (Ball 1995, chap. 4)

What we need to notice in Plato's and Hobbes' views of corruption, particularly the corrupt use of speech, is the tight conceptual relationship they draw between social and political order on the one hand, and the correct use of words in public on the other. The theoretical premises are clear and central: words should function as cooperative pacts, orienting both speaker and hearer toward a common, shared moral order. But this pragmatic function can be undermined when words become merely expressive of the interests and desires of the speaker, without regard to their roles in securing order. They become detached from their true referents (Plato) or their agreed upon meanings (Hobbes), and lose their capacities to guide common purposes and actions. What is "corrupted" is, precisely, the relationship between words and social order, and the "corrupt" use of words is the use of meanings to further particular interests against a shared interest.

But of course Plato and Hobbes sell us too much, the effect of which is to resolve the problem of corrupt speech by removing political disagreement. Their moves are well-known, and follow from their respective theories of meaning. In the case of Plato, words are able to order social relations just to the extent that they are true, anchored in their representations of metaphysical entities. The proper (uncorrupt) role of speech is to mediate the relationship between the self and this kind of order, and then to leverage this order against mere opinion—those uses of speech that have come loose from sources of meaning. But once the authoritative content of speech is conceived, as it were, beyond relations among humans, its relationships to possible social ordering is limited to two possibilities. It may be imposed on behalf of philosophers, as in the logic of the philosopher-king, or it may be removed to sheltered spaces in which dialectic can be conducted free of politics, the case Socrates pled in *The Apology*. The fact that speech can become corrupt—and will do so under pressure of desires—either legitimates the tyranny of philosophers, or dismisses "the political" as irredeemably corrupt.

In the case of Hobbes the nominalist, meaning is imposed by words, which are then linked correctly (or incorrectly) through logical inferences, producing a cognitive order upon which political order can build. Because Hobbes' key problem is to avoid disorder, the certainty associated with correct reasoning is to be backed by power; the hedge against corruption is to locate authority over meaning in the *Leviathan*.

This pattern of overreaching—and its pernicious consequences for deliberative responses to politics—has two contemporary parallels. The first is the populist discourse of corruption, which slides into a search for non-political anchors for meanings, in religion, tradition, honour, and character, each of which can buttress authoritarian responses to politics. In this respect, Plato's diagnosis of political speech is not unlike that of roughly half of Americans today. They, like Plato, are also tempted by the security of anchors outside "the political"—which is why, no doubt, the populist discourse of corruption slides so easily into alliance with authoritarianism. The second is the use of such generalized discourses of corruption by authoritarian regimes to justify the punishment of political enemies. Because Plato and Hobbes prepare the way, conceptually speaking, for these kinds of slippage because they are unable to distinguish disagreement and contest—the essence of deliberative politics—from disorder.

From this perspective, the modern move to delink the concept of political corruption from moral degeneration—that is, corruption as disorder—and link it to codified abuses of public office for private gain counts as progress (M. E. Warren 2004). By limiting the idea of political corruption to acts that short-circuit public decision-making—acts such as bribery or influence-peddling—the modern conception signals that decisions bearing on public matters should be visible to those publics. Similarly, by tying political corruption to specific acts of malfeasance, the modern concept signals that disagreements within spaces of political contestation are not in themselves a threat to order.

5. *Deceit as threat*

And yet Plato and Hobbes were onto something missed by the modern conception: the fact that language can generate its own forms of disorder. If we fail to frame this problem, we will also fail to frame the question as to why the discourse of political corruption remains so potent. To see how and why the problem remains, let us restate the problem, not as one of order and disorder (as it was for Plato and Hobbes), but one of self-rule and coercion, a problem that moves to the center of democracy. What we need to look for are they ways in which the corruption of language can threaten self-rule because it amounts to a kind of coercion. On this framing of the problem, the corruption of language has to do primarily with *deceit*, which is the primarily path through which language's capacity to order social relationships is corroded.

Democracy valorizes talk, and does so for good reason: talk-based responses to conflict are better than other means of dealing with conflict. But to buy into talk-based politics is also to trust that talk can accomplish political work—not just expressing positions and preferences, but also carrying commitments of the kind that people can count upon. Talk works just insofar it references these commitments. So it is not that talk must have referential anchors (truth) outside of

the social relationships that comprise this kind of interaction as Plato and Hobbes thought. Rather, speakers must *trust* one another in a particular way: they must trust that what others say is what they mean, and what they mean is what they commit themselves to, especially with respect to others. Others rely upon the consistency with which people commit, from which they induce the reliability of others.. Of course, people can make mistakes or say things in error or play. What matters, however, is that, all other things being equal, a speaker is "a man of his word," and that words establish certainties upon which others can rely..Words are the means through which commitments among and between persons are established, with all the existential certainties these imply, including that one is not being manipulated by those to whom one commits.

I shall return to elaborate this point in the next section. For the moment, however, we need to specify the problem of deceit, as it gives us a specifiable window on the meaning of corruption as concerns language use. Sisela Bok, in her discussion of lying, gets this point exactly right when she argues that what is at issue in the case of lies is not *truth* but *truthfulness*. There is a

> crucial difference between two domains: the *moral* domain of intended truthfulness and deception, and the much vaster domain of truth and falsity in general. The moral question of whether you are lying or not is not s*ettled* by establishing the truth or falsity of what you say. In order to settle this question, we must know whether you *intend your statement to mislead*. (Bok 1978, 6).

What people depend upon—what they trust—is that they can count on those with whom they interact not to deceive: "There must be a minimal degree of trust in communication for language and action to be more than stabs in the dark. This is why some level of truthfulness has always been seen as essential to human society, no matter how deficient the observance of other moral principles" (Bok 1978, 19).

It is only because we rely, and must rely, on others in this way that this kind of trust can be abused. Such abuse is not benign: the normal expectations of trust can be used by others to work their will in ways that both depend upon the (naïve) trust of others, and depend upon hiding this will from those who, unwittingly, fall for the deceit. Again, Bok gets the point precisely right by noting that deceit involves a kind of coercion; and a deceiver is one who can convert trust into advantageous power:

> Deceit and violence—these are the two forms of deliberate assault on human beings. Both can coerce people in to acting against their will. Most harm that can befall victims through violence can come to them also through deceit. But deceit works more subtly, for it works on belief as well as action. ... The knowledge of this coercive element in deception, and of our vulnerability to it, underlies our sense of the *centrality* of truthfulness (Bok 1978, 19).

"To the extent that knowledge gives power, to that extent do lies affect the distribution of power; they add to that of the liar, and diminish that of the deceived, altering his choices at different levels" (Bok 1978, 20). Deception can, then, "be coercive. When it succeeds, it can give power to the deceiver—power that all who suffered the consequences of lies would not wish to abdicate" (Bok 1978, 23).

This, then, is the hazard that is peculiar to deliberative democracy: speakers may be suckered by deception, and those who are suckered are subject to coercion. The corruption inheres in the deception (and species of deception, including manipulation and hypocrisy)*: words are not expressing intent, and the hidden intent is a condition for a coercive effect.* It is this possibility, I am arguing, that keeps the discourse of corruption alive—including its distinctive language of betrayals, distrust, fears of being manipulated or suckered, and fears of conspiracies.

We find this same insight offered by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*, albeit in a more general form. Humans build lives together by relying upon one another, and in so doing bring about a world they hold in common. Politics is of this world. And, yet, this common world is objectionable precisely where it becomes most "political," not in the insipid sense that politics is what we do in common, but in the more pointed sense in which it is what we do in common in the face of disagreement, which raises the possibility of ill will and deceit. Politics brings with it not simply uncertainty, but *motivated* uncertainty:

> The unpredictability which the act of making promises at least partially dispels is of a twofold nature: it arises simultaneously out of the 'darkness of the human heart,' that is, the basic unreliability of men who never guarantee today who they will be tomorrow, and out of the impossibility of foretelling the consequences of an act within a community of equals where everybody has the same capacity to act. Man's inability to rely upon himself or to have complete faith in himself (which is the same thing) is the price humans pay for freedom; and the impossibility of remaining unique masters of what they do, of knowing its consequences and relying upon the future, is the price they pay for plurality and reality, for the joy of inhabiting together with others a world whose reality is guaranteed for each by the presence of all. (Arendt 1958, 244)

Arendt recognizes, fully and completely, that the uncertainties of politics can also count as objections. They represent the dangers that produce the temptations to impose—what she calls "substituting making for acting"—that is, treating human relationships as if they were natural objects that can be engineered to provide certainty. Unlike Hobbes and Plato—both engineers and thus authoritarians—Arendt points out that certainties need not be external to politics. She discusses *promises* in particular—commitments people make to one another—as the key alternative to "sovereignty and rule." "The function of the faculty of promising is to master this twofold darkness of human affairs and is, as such, the only alternative to a mastery which relies on domination of one's self and rule over others; it

corresponds exactly to the existence of a freedom which was given under the condition of non-sovereignty." (Arendt 1958, 244)

6. The pragmatics of language use

If the uncertainties that are inherent to politics (Arendt) are focused by the question of deceit (Bok), then two important conclusions follow. First, the discourse of corruption references the corrupt use of language, and remains pervasive *especially within talk-based democracies* owing to the coercive consequences of deceit. Second, what is "corrupted" is not the relationship between words and referents that make them true or false, but between words and commitments. What it at issue are the social relationships established by words. Words both perform and disclose a social world of actors who are, in principle, solid enough that one can trust the other. If language has the power to coerce through deceit, this power is parasitic on its more general and essential power to generate social order built on relationships of trust, established by the world of words.

Here is the essential point: *Language provides social order, not because it references truths external to that order, but because it generates that order as a consequence of what is accomplished through language use.* Social orders based on linguistic communication *can be corrupted by deceitful or otherwise untrustworthy uses of language.* It follows that a deliberative democracy must protect from this kind of ordering from corruption—from deceitful forms of manipulation—since this kind of language use destroys the resource upon which deliberative politics depends.

This point has not been fully and appropriately emphasized by contemporary theorists of deliberative democracy, mostly because they focus—naturally enough—on the cognitive work that is accomplished by deliberation in creating, settling, or negotiating moral and factual claims and assertions. But the first contemporary theorist of deliberative democracy—Habermas—built his theory out of a pragmatic philosophy of language (what he called "universal pragmatics") that emphasized the social relationships that are established as a consequence of making claims, and upon which the cognitive content of claims depend for their capacities to coordinate among and between social actors (J. Habermas 1979, Chap. 1, J. Habermas 1984, Chapter III, J. Habermas 1998). Habermas follows Austin in distinguishing those features of speech acts that aim at understanding—what they call their *locutionary* force—from their effects in establishing social relationships as a consequence of speaking—their *illocutionary* force. Thus, through "locutionary acts the speaker expresses a state of affairs; he says something. Through illocutionary acts the speaker performs an action in saying something." (J. Habermas 1984, 288–289) By promising, claiming, expressing, and so on, the speaker establishes a relationship with the listener, attributing to him/her the qualities (and moral status) of agency, of the kind that can be moved by, and commit to, promises, claims, expressions, and the like. As a consequence, speakers produce what Habermas calls "the knots in the

network of communicative sociation; the illocutionary lexicon is, as it were, the sectional plane in which the language and the institutional order of a society interpenetrate." (J. Habermas 1984, 321) In this way, speaking creates "legitimate orders of the social world and at the same time initiates new interpersonal relations." (J. Habermas 1984, 324-325) So the work accomplished by deliberation is in part about *what* is deliberated: conflicts, claims, values, information, and matters of substance that is communicated through language. But it is in part about the *relationships* that are established as a consequence of speaking and listening—relationships that constitute speakers as agents who have the kind of solidity that others can trust.

In order to grasp the powers of deliberative democracy, then, we need to understand this process of social construction that is the residue, as it were, of speech. We find even more help in Robert Brandom's philosophy of language. Like Habermas, Brandom shows that ability of speakers to convey meaning through statements is part and parcel of the social relationships they establish as a consequence of speaking. More specifically, when social actors make claims, their content is conveyed just insofar as each participant in a conversation can assume that every other participant knows how to continue from the commitments that follow from claims. What enables a speech act to have impact—for speakers to move one another—is that each act brings with it a social fabric of commitments of authorization and responsibility. In making a claim—undertaking a commitment—speakers accept a responsibility to demonstrate their entitlement to that claim. Trust comes into play insofar as hearers attribute to the speaker an entitlement to make a claim before accepting it and using it in their own reasoning processes. Commitments then derive their content as a result of being inferentially linked in such a way that actors know how to "go on" from any particular claim, and can assume that others will likewise. If speakers cannot trust that others are entitled to their claims and commitments by virtue of their other commitments, their observations and their inheritance of claims from previous, equally entitled speakers, even the inferential system that conveys meaning on speech risks breaking down. Brandom writes,

> Beliefs and claims that are *propositionally* contentful are necessarily *representationally* contentful because their inferential articulation essentially involves a *social* dimension. That social dimension is unavoidable because the inferential significance of a claim, the appropriate antecedents and consequences of a doxastic commitment, depends on the background of collateral commitments available for service as auxiliary hypotheses. One wants to say that the *correct* inferential role is determined by the collateral claims that are *true*. Just so; that is what *each* interlocutor wants to say: each has an at least slightly different perspective from which to evaluate inferential properties. Representational locutions make explicit the sorting of commitments into those attributed and those undertaken—without which communication would be impossible, given those differences of perspective. The *representational* dimension of propositional contents reflects the *social*

> structure of the *inferential* articulation in the game of giving and asking for reasons." (Brandom 2000, 183)

If Brandom's theory of meaning is right, then we can see that Plato's and Hobbes' truth-referential theories of meaning head off in the wrong direction—causing both to look for the authority of claims outside, as it were, of the world created through social interaction. They thus fail to understand that the authority of words devolves, in the end, to the authority of competent speakers and the commitments that follow from their very capacities to communicate. This point is quite essential for theories of deliberative democracy: in the process of giving and asking for reasons, speakers commit themselves to their assertions, and they take on responsibility for the inferences that follow from assertions. The capacity to do so defines what it means to be a social being in a very particular sense: that one can learn rules, state them, and then understand what follows from the statement. Discursive commitments, Brandom writes,

> are distinguished by their specifically inferential articulation: what counts as evidence for them, what else they commit us to, what other commitments are incompatible with in the sense of precluding entitlement to. … The overall idea is that the rationality that qualifies us as *sapients* (and not merely sentients) can be identified with being a player in the social, implicitly normative game of offering and assessing, producing and consuming, reasons. (Brandom 2000, 81)

Brandom emphasizes the essentially normative character of language use with the evocative image of "discursive practice as *deontic scorekeeping*: the significance of a speech act is how it changes what commitments and entitlements one attributes and acknowledges" (Brandom 2000, 81, emphasis added). When I speak or act, I entitle you to expect from me that which is inferred by my claim or action. I take on an obligation with respect to you. If you respond, you take on an obligation with respect to me, as stated or implied in your response. In this way, scorekeepers "are licensed to infer our beliefs from our intentional actions (in context of course), as well as from our speech acts" (Brandom 2000, 93). The most fundamental form of this obligation is the obligation to demonstrate entitlement to a doxastic commitment (belief) or a practical commitment (action). This fabric of commitments is not a moral structure added from outside of language; it is intrinsic to language use:

> Specifically *linguistic* practices are those in which some performances are accorded the significance of assertions or claimings—the undertakings of inferentially articulated (and so propositionally contentful) commitments. Mastering such linguistic practices is a matter of learning how to keep score on the inferentially articulated commitments and entitlements of various interlocutors, oneself included. Understanding a speech act—grasping its discursive significance—is being able to attribute the right commitments in

> response. This is knowing how it changes the score of what the performer and the audience is entitled to." (Brandom 2000, 164-165)

Knowing how to use language is doubly constitutive of social relationship and individual agency. On the one hand, knowing how to use language is to know how to "go on" from the rules, expectations, and norms expressed in speech acts. On the other hand, in so doing speakers take the normative characteristics of responsible agents—in particular, agents responsible for the content of their claims—in relation to those they seek to move or motivate with their claims. Thus,

> [o]ne way of thinking about the claims by which discursive commitments are expressed is in terms of the interaction of inferentially articulated *authority* and *responsibility*. In making an assertion, one lends to the asserted content one's *authority*, licensing others to undertake a corresponding commitment to use as a premise in *their* reasoning. Thus, one essential aspect of this model of discursive practice is *communication*: the interpersonal, intracontent inheritance of entitlement to commitments. In making an assertion one also undertakes a *responsibility*—to justify the claim if appropriately challenged, and thereby to redeem one's entitlement to the commitment acknowledged by the claiming. Thus another essential aspect of this model of discursive practice is *justification*: the intrapersonal, intercontent inheritance of entitlement to commitments." (Brandom 2000, 165)

Language use is in this way linked intrinsically to trust and trustworthiness of a normatively thick kind: through communication, each individual becomes an author of claims in such a way that others can infer from these claims agent-like capacities to commit, and to take responsibility for commitments. Individuals build these fabrics of commitments in such a way that they can move through society with a trust that others are not only non-arbitrary in their actions, but that the rules of social engagement can, in principle, be figured out, negotiated through language where necessary, and then counted upon, in the sense that they come with the motivations intrinsic to social coordination through communication.

The connection between this analysis and deliberative democracy resides in the work performed by these commitments when speakers disagree, as evidenced by conflicts between commitments and attributions. Under Brandom's description of language use, speakers can, ideally, make explicit the implied inferences that underwrite their claims or actions, such that they can reason about the implications, adjust, and resettle. This kind of activity depends upon a trust that a speaker will respond by trying to make inferences explicit, and will adjust (say) to evidence that beliefs are incorrect or normative obligations have unexpected applications. There is trust here: trust that the process of "making it explicit" will motivate by exposing beliefs and norms in such a way that they make a difference to commitments. "Corruption of language," under this description, refers not to mistaken inferences, but rather to the circumstance that "making it explicit" has no motivational force

because a speaker commits to (say) new beliefs or adjusted norms, but fails to follow through on what inferentially follows—that is, what others are license to infer from speech. That is, words become detached from the commitments they imply, in such a way that individuals (citizens) develop the cynical view that words carry no weight, and those who would take political discourse serious are likely to become dupes.†

7. Promising versus trusting

This general claim that language use brings into existence a social world of commitments has a family resemblance to Hannah Arendt's account of speech as the feature of action that discloses agency through creating a world in common (Arendt 1958, Chap. 24). But there is also an important distinction. Whereas Arendt emphasizes the uncertainty of action—humans can always change their minds—Habermas and Brandom show that there is a relatively solid layer of normative commitments that is always already present wherever there is communication. Of course, humans can and do break their commitments. But there is no *inherent* uncertainty in social life of the kind Arendt emphasizes—though, as I suggested above, there is *motivated* uncertainty within the domain of politics. This difference is important: because she emphasizes the uncertainty of social action, Arendt loads all certainty onto *promising*, while noting that promises are a rigid sort of certainty, so much so that were they to be extended to the whole of social life, freedom would be squeezed away (Arendt 1958, 244).

The difference between the chains of commitments that are left in the wake of language use and promising is important: a promise *binds* agency in a way that successive commitments and reciprocal adjustments among responsible agents do not. One asks for a promise where there is *distrust.* Where I do not believe that you have my interests in view, or where I have little reason to trust that you will act in ways that follow from implied commitments, I have no reason to trust you. If your actions will nonetheless affect me, I will try to contain or direct your actions by extracting a promise, just because I distrust your intent. A promise binds agency in the future by singling out a single speech act in the present—a promise—and then freezing its content in space and time. The reasons for promising are, in effect, uncertainties about commitments, and hence uncertainty about the solidity of the agent as well as uncertainly about the implications (inferences) that would have a temporal, evolving character if conditions of trust were in place.

It is in part for this reason that promises take on such importance in politics, a domain of conflicting interests that does not, generally speaking, support trust (M. E. Warren 1999)..Nonetheless, even when interests conflict, deliberative politics depends on what I have referred to elsewhere as "second order" trust: trust that

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† I am indebted to Aubin Calvert for suggesting the formulations in this paragraph.

parties to conflicts will deal with them through open, knowable procedures (M. E. Warren 2006). That is, parties to conflicts must have confidence in the institutions that enable conflicts to be deliberated, negotiated, and then (if necessary) voted upon. Arendt is at a loss here: she explains the kinds of certainties that people have in institutionalized rules such as constitution as a consequence of treating their human origins as artefact-like, a consequence of fabrication, such that their certainties function much like the certainties provided by bridges or buildings, which certainly depend upon the skill of designers or builder for their certainty, but do not depend upon enacted commitments.

But once we lay bare the mechanisms through which commitments come into being, we can see that there is nothing especially mysterious about institutional commitments. We learn that parties to conflicts can be trustworthy, even if we disagree with them. Trustworthiness is not unconditional: it is a judgment that we might make about our political adversaries if we find that they are airing their disagreements in public, offering them as claims or positions, and then abiding by agreements once they are struck. That is, the rules that formalize procedures of conflict are commitments as well. If they are broken, they have consequences: the next deal will be more difficult to reach; or, if it is reached, it will be costly to monitor; or the next conflict may devolve into war. Even partisans leave trails of commitments that establish the conditions for deliberating present and future conflicts. Healthy (deliberative) democracies manage to develop a second-order trust in procedures, which are effective just insofar as they are the objects of commitments. These kinds of commitments are enacted, much like other commitments. They are effective because they are used: partisans trust one another not to take up arms in the face of a loss; they trust one another to leave office, accept legislative compromises and defeats, and to fight the next battle with word and votes. We can now see that there is a parallel necessity in language use: parties to deliberation need to know (or trust) that commitments made explicit, and codified into institutions, are those that can then become trustworthy bases for argument, persuasion, deliberation, bargaining, or negotiation. They form, as it were, the background certainties that transform the procedures of "making it explicit" into a way of conducting politics. In contrast, while promises have their uses, they also bind agency in ways that make deliberation—indeed, any kind of responsible attentiveness to others and to circumstances—less likely.

8. Conceptualizing the corruption of speech

We can now say with a bit more precision what the corruption of language use entails. We know, of course, that it entails deceit and its variations: lying, dissimulation, purposeful omission, evasive language, or language that is intentionally obscure or otherwise lacking in clear meaning. But this survey of the pragmatics of language use should suggest that the problem of corruption in language is not that words come loose from their referents, as argued by Plato and Hobbes. Rather, language is corrupted when actors violate the *inferential structure*

of speech upon which actors depend to regulate social life. Corruption occurs when actors violate the norms that are intrinsic to language use, which establish in turn the rules, meanings, and practical commitments upon which people count in organizing their social relations, which establish the trust-based securities of social life, as well as the institutional securities of political life. What is "corrupted" are these pragmatic functions of language. Where these uses are missing, so are collective goods upon which deliberative democracy depends: in particular, the sense that agents follow rules and norms that are knowable, predictable, and revealed in speech and action. And, following from this basic function, deliberative democracy should leave a trail of "deontic scorekeeping" which enables trust—in particular a trust that the conflicts, positions, and principles that are expressed in words commit an actor to, say, a vote for or against, to a bargain or compromise, or to an agreed consensus.

Habermas hints at this conception of corruption in his analysis of *perlocutionary* speech acts (J. Habermas 1984, 286-295). These are speech acts that aim to bring about an effect on another actor, not by seeking agreement, but rather by using speech to evoke an action or reaction. Habermas argues that perlocutionary effects depend upon illocutionary effects: to be able to strategically manipulate a hearer, the speaker must rely on the hearer's understanding of the statements as an attempt to communicate; the hearer can be manipulated when they understand a statement as having this intent. This parasitic dependence of perlocution on illocution explains why one who discovers the manipulative intent will also feel suckered, angry, sold out, *betrayed*: such effects depend upon misplaced trust. If those who are subject to manipulation feel betrayed—if they understand the manipulator as "corrupt", then it is easy to see that *what* is corrupted is the fabric of illocutions upon which so much social life depends. We can also see that those who manipulate often face diminishing returns: most of us feel uneasy with the overly friendly car salesman, who then must go out of his way to assure us of his integrity. We might likewise feel uneasy with campaign speeches and ads: the context is strategic, and we are (distrustfully) on the lookout for manipulative intent.

What I am suggesting, then, is that there is a good amount of common sense embedded in the discourse of corruption, even though that same discourse can and does become a pathology in its own right. If people are primed for distrust by a discourse of corruption, they may attribute manipulative intent even when it is not there, so that politicians are all painted with the same brush, and nothing they could say can push through the fear of being suckered. But the discourse of corruption can only gain traction because there are real stakes. Deceit, dissimulation, and the like are, when they occur, radically disruptive of the securities upon which people depend in everyday life. They apply these same standards to politics, especially to the political speech of politicians. When they do so, they level the kinds of judgments they use in everyday life onto politicians: they want to know about a politician's "character"; whether he is "honourable", whether he "stands by his word"; whether he is "sincere"; whether he is trustworthy. Indeed, it is a characteristic of politics in

today's democracies that these questions are often *more* important to citizens that questions of policy (Hetherington 2005, Thompson 2000, 111-113). Voters often seek out what Jane Mansbridge calls "gyroscopic" representatives—representatives who exhibit solid, unwavering uncorruptable character, who voters select precisely because they can be trusted and do not require monitoring (Mansbridge 2003, Mansbridge 2009). When these expectations appear to be disappointed—when speech fails to reveal character, questions of intent become paramount. When speech becomes suspect for any reason, a politician (so voters think) might be hiding just about anything. Behind this sensibility is, probably, a view that language has failed to establish and reveal the kinds of commitments upon which people must depend in everyday life. This is the lesson deliberative democrats need to absorb from the often angry and populist discourse of corruption.

9. Hedging against the corruption of speech

If these analyses are correct, we can redescribe deliberative democratic systems as those that *hedge against the corruption of speech*. No system that depends upon language can or should regulate speech directly. But it can "hedge" by constructing institutions that provide the kinds of incentives and experiences that induce and teach people that they can and should approach political conflict through persuasion, and that they can and should rely on language-based commitments that follow. This conception is not an alternative to contemporary theories of deliberative democracy. Rather, it is an amendment, for which there are two compelling reasons.

The most important reason is that it focuses directly upon the question of how to protect and enhance the central resource of deliberative democracy: the human capacity to use language to build trustworthy social environments. To highlight these capacities, I have used a model that idealizes everyday interactions, as if they differential power and status do not intrude, nor do dogmatic cultures, traditions, and ideologies freeze language into formulas, nor do different styles and cultures of speaking, nor differential status positions that stem from sex, education, race, ethnicity, age, disabilities, or other social markers. The purpose of this model is not to bracket "the political", and certainly not to suggest that everyday life is not subject to power, status, and dogmatism. Of course it is. The purpose, rather, is to highlight normative expectations immanent to language use, the expectations that are a consequence of successful communication. These expectations can be radically disappointed, and can generate a discourse of disappointment that often takes the form of a discourse of corruption. But when protected, the capacities of language to generate political order that realizes most good things are enormous. These capacities cannot be taken for granted: they can be (and are) despoiled and squandered, much like other commons. Should these capacities be destroyed, however, there are no normatively attractive alternatives.

Second, we are now keenly aware of non-linguistic threats to deliberative approaches to politics—from differential powers and status to internal exclusions resulting from differences in education and culture. These threats have been addressed extensively in the literature (Young 2000, Dryzek 2010, Chambers 2003). The lens of corruption brings into focus a different kind of threat—an everyday hazard that comes with language use itself: the possibility that individuals will count upon the commitments enabled by language, only to fall victim to deceit. This anxiety is common to all who use language, though it is typically well-contained through trust built up through iterated commitments. Nonetheless, politics conducted through language—deliberative politics—moves this anxiety to the foreground, just because political conflict is sublimated into talk. When other means of conducting conflict—coercive suppression, for example—have been tamed, motivations to win are mediated by talk, which in turn increases the motivations for deceit and other corrupt uses of language. So while this sense of "corruption" is by no means unique to deliberative politics, it is a hazard that remains with deliberative politics, just insofar as it is a system based upon the ideal that conflicts can and should be addressed through talk. It is this anxiety that is exploited by those who use the discourse of corruption to spread cynicism about the mere use of words—about "pretty speech" that is hiding dark and unspoken agendas (a tactic consistently deployed against Obama). It is this anxiety that makes the authoritarian responses to the corruption of language compelling to many, a temptation exemplified by Plato and Hobbes, but which can be found in the appeals of any contemporary speaker who points to corruption and then offers the security of a trusted person, an imagined national, ethnic, racial, or religious community of like-minded people, an ideological system, or a religion, guaranteed by authoritarian means. Deliberative politics is not *uniquely* vulnerable to such appeals, but it remains vulnerable to them, just because its core medium, speech, is vulnerable to uncertainties, some of them resulting from the corruption of speech.

If we grant that the corruption of speech is a hazard that moves to the heart of deliberative politics just insofar as speech is its core medium, then we should conceive of deliberative democratic systems as those that hedge against the corruption of speech. We might even think of these systems as specializing in these kinds of hedges to ensure that the work of politics is channelled into speech. We can think of these hedges as working in three areas: inclusions, representation, and citizen capacities for judgment.

Inclusion: The relationship between inclusions and hedges against linguistic corruption is the most straightforward and needs little elaboration. If language is to do the work of political conflict resolution, agents should have the resources necessary for inclusion in matters that affect them. Stated negatively, agents should be able to function as veto-players if they are not included in decisions that affect them. Veto capacities can be distributed in the form of various rights that provide citizens with political or legal standing, process requirements, and information. These kinds of capacities are underwritten by social supports for education as well as information and deliberation-rich public spheres. Where these conditions exist,

decision-makers have the incentives to include those who might otherwise function as veto-players (M. E. Warren 2009). But in addition, these same veto capacities should provide decision-makers with incentives to use language in ways that are trustworthy and credible—that is, non-corrupt. The costs of being caught out in deceits will mean that potential veto players will be pushed into opposition. In contrast, where language is put to credible use, it can leave a trail of commitments that, over time, empowers deliberative problem-solving.

Representation: Most citizens, however, are included in those matters that affect them indirectly through representatives, including formal representatives, elected or appointed, as well as a variety of informal representatives, such as advocacy groups. What citizens need from representatives with regard to language is not agreement, but trust that what representatives say is what they mean. Otherwise, citizens have no basis upon which to judge the extent to which they are being represented (M. E. Warren 2006). The first nudge toward this kind of credibility is relatively straightforward: citizens cannot know, directly, whether their representatives are speaking credibly. But they can know something about institutional incentives: representatives should not operate in an atmosphere saturated by money and differential access, nor should institutions leave these kinds of incentives on the table. Institutions should be designed, at the very least, to blunt these kinds of incentives. Checks and balances, oversight and auditing, transparency and public information rules and regulations, disclosure rules, and prohibitions against conflicts of interest should function to ensure that citizens can generalize from the credibility of institutional rules to the credibility of office-holders, including their representatives. In addition, appearances matter: money-based political influence markets that operate through campaign financing, favours, and differential access to decision-makers should not only be contained, but *appear* to citizens to be contained, in such a way that they can have confidence that there representatives are not tempted by corrupt opportunities (M. E. Warren 2006, Stark 2000).. Many of the same kind of disclosure requirements should apply to advocacy groups, particularly in an era in which representative claims by advocacy groups are proliferating and serving an increasingly important role in including interests, voices, and perspectives that are overlooked by electoral democracy (Urbinati 2008).

Yet owing to the strategic necessities of winning and holding office, even with these kinds of checks elected representatives have many incentives to use language strategically and even manipulatively, even when straight-out deceit is uncommon. Framing issues, seeking rhetorical advantage, choosing campaign phrases that resonate with focus groups are all part of what a competitive, talk-based polity. These features of political discourse in representative democracies will remain wherever there is political competition, and under many conditions they may contribute to political deliberation (Garsten 2006). But these features should, probably, be leavened with new forms of political representation that do not respond to these strategic necessities, and so are more likely to produce forms of speech that respond to political issues, but not to political strategies. One example is

the Citizens' Assembly, in which citizens are randomly selected, so they do not face the strategic necessities of election. The body is accountable to the public as a collectivity, as when their recommendations are put to a referendum, or count as advice to an elected legislature (M. E. Warren 2008). Such bodies could function as new kinds of information proxies for citizens, one for which the conditions of trust in speech are more robust than they are for elected representatives (Mackenzie 2012). Research suggests that, in fact, citizens' may see such bodies as relatively more trustworthy (Cutler 2008). Seeding the public domain with political entities that are more likely to earn the trust of citizens could help to produce something like "markets in integrity," in which every political agent must seek to protect, as a political asset, their reputation for credible speech (Thompson 2000, 92-93, Philp 2001, 374).

Citizen judgment: Yet none of these institutional designs and incentives will make much difference if citizens are removed from the information they need to make judgments of about the credibility of their representatives. The problem is endemic to the fact that in mass societies most people have, necessarily, a mediated relationship to decision-makers. Citizens are left to infer credibility from the shards of information gleaned by the media from staged appearances. There is, probably, nothing inherently problematic about this fact: it is likely that, over the course of a career, political representatives leave a trail of impressions, words, and actions from which credibility can be inferred. We should probably take comfort from the fact that presidential candidates in the US must run a gauntlet of tests, beginning with face-to-face judgments of voters in Iowa and New Hampshire, and ending with the highly mediated national stage. Over the course of a career, character flaws are often exposed, or credibility is solidified. But all that said, most citizens make judgments with too little information; they are too highly mediated; and—alarmingly—mere consistency (as in the case of George W. Bush) can pass for trustworthiness. More alarmingly, media market segmentation means that some proportion of citizens are paying attention only to sources that confirm their beliefs and prejudices—and, indeed, it is within these niche media markets that the discourse of corruption is most fully exploited, Glenn Beck (in the US) being the most recent case. More generally, on average, mediated relationships lack the information and reciprocity necessary for language to lay down a trail of trustworthy commitments.

Here too we should consider the functions of supplementary democratic venues, not because they change the mediated characteristic of mass politics, but because they hold out the possibility of altering and perhaps improving citizen attentiveness, as well as citizens' tolerance for the relative messiness of political conflict. From this perspective, the best recent piece of news is reported by Larry Jacobs and his colleagues, who show that the number of deliberative venues in the US has now reached a sufficient density that relatively large number citizens have direct experience of political deliberation, and many have experience with deliberative decision-making (Jacobs 2009). It is possible, though as yet not researched (as far as I know), that citizen experience with deliberative decision-making, with its requirements for a combination of toleration, respect, credibility,

and persuasion, will also cause them to be less attracted to the disaffected discourse of corruption, and to operate more like critical citizens who trust when it is warranted, but engage and participate where interests conflict and trust is misplaced (Mackenzie 2012).

10. Conclusion

I have been arguing that we can learn something about what deliberative democratic systems require and accomplish by paying attention to the discourse of corruption. The positive lesson is that the discourse expresses a disappointment with political language that fails the test of everyday talk, and reveals the powerful expectation that lay down they layers commitments upon which social life builds. The lesson that deliberative democratic theorists can take away is that language is a resource that must be protected, and can be protected by developing a system of hedges against the corruption of language. If these hedges work, then the corrosive qualities of the discourse of corruption—particularly those that provoke authoritarian temptations—should become less viable, because they would have fewer realities upon which to grow.

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