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Jeremy Bendik-Keymer

Case Western Reserve University, jeremy.bendik-keymer@case.edu

Author(s) ORCID Identifier:

[Jeremy Bendik-Keymer](#)

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Of Life Beyond Domination: Capability Determination, Surfacing, Norm Play

Jeremy Bendik-Keymer

ABSTRACT: “Surfacing” is the process of rediscovering one’s sense of self-determination from within a context of enduring domination, including systems of enduring domination, such as racism, capitalism, and patriarchy. “Enduring domination” is the afterlife of domination that carries on into the conditions and mentality of anyone affected by domination, even indirectly. This article rigs together a concept from the Capability Approach to human development, a process from intersectional, epistemic justice work, and some broad possibilities within social practice art around norm play and subversion to fill out a practice of wondering that helps its participants surface. It serves as a contribution to broadly decolonial work.

KEYWORDS: self-determination, Capability Approach, oppression, social practice art, wonder

*A muddy walk, just after almost slipping (and before almost slipping again),
as we laugh; time unknown, Cleveland, OH, April 2015.¹*

For Surfacing

Let us call “surfacing” the process of rediscovering one’s sense of self-determination from within a context of enduring domination, including systems of enduring domination, such as racism, capitalism, and patriarchy (Mignolo 2021; Mignolo and Walsh 2019).² One may not actually *be* completely self-determined in the context, but now one has one’s mind for it, leeway in one’s understanding of one’s situation by which one might shake things looser toward more autonomy—and not just alone, but in community too.

Correspondence: jdb179@case.edu

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Let us call “enduring domination” that afterlife of domination that carries on into the heteronomous or adaptive conditions and mentality of anyone historically affected by domination, even indirectly. Domination involves subjecting the will of another to potential coercion that they do not recognize as justifiable in the absence of a process that painstakingly seeks justification in matters where wills are to be swayed or directed.³ Enduring domination is the name I give for what others call “oppression.”⁴ It signals that in conditions that are oppressive but that have no obvious and direct domination structuring them, domination holds down the system somewhere, offstage, so to speak.⁵

To unsettle systems of enduring domination while inside them is no easy matter in part because these systems incentivize and teach adaptations to them. The systems end up in our heads and in our philosophies, and sometimes even by our reactions to them. For people who remain stuck inside them, there are ways to make the systems tremble locally, to open the space between us and in our minds for other ways of being human than as adapted to the systems. Part of the systems’ power over us is their purported saturation of the lifeworld in totality. To be able to think otherwise than them already undermines the power of their totalization. Developing our imagination of processes that can do this contributes to our potential for self-determination. We should be especially interested in practices that maintain a “critical attitude” toward the rationalized norms of dominating systems and that help us internalize this attitude in modest but real forms of self-determination (cf. Foucault 1996).

What are some of the tools available for building these practices? Writing here in a journal hospitable to critical thought and culture, I am thinking of thought-tools—of concepts and symbolic works that might help me imagine what to aim for in grassroots, community politics and how to open up possibilities accordingly. I am interested in exploring how surfacing can be structured through social practices. I rig together a concept from the Capability Approach to human development (henceforth “CA”), a process from intersectional, epistemic justice work, and some broad possibilities within social practice art around norm play and subversion to fill out a practice of wondering that helps its participants surface. I take this as a contribution to broadly decolonial work.

First, I explore a debate in the CA that leads to what I call “capability determination.” Building on work by Rosa Terlazzo, I show that the normative core of the CA on Martha C. Nussbaum’s account has got to be self-determination and that the core question for any political community using the CA is whether people have the political capability to determine for themselves their genre of being human. But since there exists enduring domination, the question of

how to construct that political capability hinges on surfacing the complexity of domination across the political community.

This leads to the second concept of the paper, taken from Kristie Dotson's work on oppression. I argue for her concept of an "open consolidation process" as a necessary component inside capability determination so that the capability to self-determine how to live a capacious enough human life grapples with the complex reality of enduring domination. Surfacing domination, however, is extremely hard when it has settled into norms themselves (such as those of the CMP).

So, in the last part of the essay, I argue for the inclusion of artful methods of surfacing domination while creating a critical attitude around the norms rationalizing and reproducing domination. I do so via some examples from Chloë Bass's social practice art where the practice of wondering and norm subversion are intertwined with self-determination in what I call "norm-play." The result is a multi-layered practice for surfacing understood in broad outlines: capability determination involving open consolidation supported by norm play and subversion—in self-determination, an art of wondering of life beyond domination.

What Do You Need to Be Able to Be Self-determining? The Practice of Capability Determination

The CA is a forty-some-year old tradition that University of Cambridge elites Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen attached to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the Human Development Index (HDI). Given the structural violence of dominant forms of macro-economic "development" in the twentieth century and the ways that forms of injustice have been hidden inside the notion of what is "developed," we should have extremely mixed feelings about "development" work, and ul Haq and Sen did, too, from their elite position. But the CA opened up some unintended possibilities. For instance, in the CA of Martha C. Nussbaum, there's a powerful one that guides this article, based on recent work:

Nussbaum's CA relies on a politics of "wondering." What she means by this is underarticulated (Bendik-Keymer 2014, 2017). Nussbaum pits wondering against narcissism, and that works well with a critique of domination and its afterlife, oppression. Suitably understood as the mind's "original joy"—an expression that Nussbaum draws from Lucretius (Nussbaum 2001, pp. 189-190)—wondering radicalizes the search to become human in the normative—not bio-

logical sense (Thompson 2013). It opens up what Sylvia Wynter calls *genres of being human* (Wynter and McKittrick 2015),⁶ and this radicalizes Nussbaum's work toward a more revolutionary politics than she explicitly avows. (Bendik-Keymer 2023)⁷

One question is how wondering can relate to the CA. In what follows, I explore how to make a practice of wondering for community politics out of the CA with the support of work from intersectional analyses of oppression and norm-subversive social practice art. Suitably constructed, practices of wondering reinforce self-determination even inside our minds. When these practices are formed between us in community, they then reinforce the plurality of ways of being human. This fits how Nussbaum's CA, on pain of being dominating, must eventually center *self-determination of how to live a dignified human life in a plural way*.⁸ To speak of the self-determination being "in a plural way" is to say that what is actually at stake for her politics of wondering is how to construct and to protect a political space for many ways of finding human dignity—or an analogue in a different cultural system (e.g., de la Cadena 2015⁹)—to be empowered on the basis of the self-determination of each person in the community being protected (cf. Escobar 2020; Coulthard 2014; Pasternak 2017).

Nussbaum may not explicitly recognize this implication of her approach, but it is there. What this essay could offer is a friendly, decolonial *co-option* of Nussbaum's CA.¹⁰ Against enduring, complex domination, the politics of wondering has the potential to ground a disruptive practice from the inside of the coloniality of being. The debate around what I call "capability determination" has led me to imagine communal practices that can unsettle ways of being human reproducing enduring domination such as those found within neoliberalism and its "normality" as well as within racism and patriarchy (Mignolo 2015; cf. Ferdinand 2022; Foucault 2004). It then turns out that a main challenge structuring these practices is how to include wondering in conditions of enduring domination. That challenge orients this essay.

What I intend to show in this section is that the normative core of Nussbaum's CA has got to be self-determination and that the core question for any political community using the CA is whether people have the political capability to determine for themselves their way of expressing and articulating human dignity. This question is more subtle than it may initially seem. The CA is a species of human rights approach to social justice.¹¹ It's meant to illuminate and then protect the possibilities for people to do and to be that are integral to having a chance at living a dignified human life in a political community. Whether people want to take up these possibilities—exercise these capabilities—is up to people, but the possibilities should be protected as a matter of

political right, *and* they should be determined collectively in politically open, deliberative process (Nussbaum 2000, Introduction and chapter 1).

But a debate in the last decade disclosed how Nussbaum's written articulation of the CA might inadvertently depend on people working out together *as a political community* what a dignified, human life basically *must value*. In torquing the political community toward a shared sense of what must be valued for human dignity, Nussbaum created unintentional, normative and political pressure to *share* a way of being human, even if the understanding of being human that is shared is "minimal" and "basic" to "flourishing."¹² It helps to restage this debate in order to see how it bottoms out in the realization that self-determination must be the core of Nussbaum's CA.

To begin, the main political question in *Women and Human Development* is: How should we determine together as a political community what we ought to want in order to be empowered to live dignified, human lives? Call this the question of "capability determination." Unfortunately, Nussbaum's answer in her first major statement of the CA is somewhat confusing:

- (1) On some interpretations of the CA, which capabilities are basic to human development should be worked-out between people, not deduced from an idea, and the authority of the approach comes from intersubjectivity not from objectivity. For instance, in the Rawlsian-inspired side of Nussbaum's CA, what it is that people want in order to be empowered is to be determined iteratively through collective reflection on the model of a globally ongoing, reflective equilibrium—an aspirational and ongoing process.

- (2) But this approach to capability determination differs in content and authority from the Aristotelian-inspired side of Nussbaum's CA (sometimes called her "perfectionism"). There, what people should want in order to be empowered derives from imagining the human form of striving.¹³

Here is Nussbaum on the Aristotelian part of that tension:

The core idea [of the "intuitive" vision behind the capabilities approach] is that of the human being as a dignified free being who shapes his or her own life in cooperation and reciprocity with others, rather than being passively shaped or pushed around by the world in the manner of a 'flock' or 'herd' animal. (Nussbaum 2000, 72)

Although vague, there is a notion of human dignity here dependent on both autonomy and sociality. Yet it is (methodologically and normatively) at odds with the idea that the capabilities “list” should emerge out of and “represent” collective “discussion”:

The list [of capabilities] represents the result of years of cross-cultural discussion, and comparisons between earlier and later versions will show that the input of other voices has shaped its content in many ways. Thus, it already expresses what it proposes, a type of *overlapping consensus*. (Nussbaum 2000, 73)

Nussbaum even emphasizes the “openness” of the list to “contestation” and discussion of “overlapping consensus”:

[T]he list remains open-ended and humble: it can always be contested and remade. (Nussbaum 2000, 73)

To be clear, the methodological tension is that capabilities are to be determined by comparing how people live to an idea of human dignity *and* that capabilities are to be determined by people coming together over time to work out an “overlapping consensus” on what human dignity needs and involves. The first is monological, universalistic, and given, while the second is dialogical, pluralistic, and revisable. A person might engage in the second method without the first intuition, finding the first to interfere with their grasp of the second method.

Consider someone who thinks that “reciprocity” is undignified between some kinds of people. Perhaps they view some people’s beliefs exclude them from one’s reciprocity, such that a dignified human life is made of a specific kind of non-cooperation and non-reciprocity. They might see the way to discuss an overlapping consensus, but they would reject outright the idea of human dignity that is presumed—without consensus!—to coincide with it since they reject the presumption of reciprocity and cooperation. Thus, when someone determined the capabilities by reference to the idea of human dignity, they would view this method as having discovered nothing much at all, but as having been error-ridden from the start. On the other hand, a person who assumes reciprocity and were faced with the one who opposes it could very well find that “overlapping consensus” is a method that is flawed from the start, since the person with whom they are to find an “overlap” rejects a fundamental tenet of their vision of what makes one “human.” The dilemma goes both ways.

The normative tension also comes in tow: Nussbaum’s CA involves different sources of normativity. The one flows *from the human good broadly construed*

and the other flows *from difficult agreement*. The former is objectivist (there is an object, human dignity in striving, that is authoritative), while the latter is interpersonal (the endorsement *between* people of some norms makes them authoritative, “binding”). What are we supposed to think, let alone do, when what people agree on is at odds with the (purported) objective, human good? Moreover, the actual norms—not just their sources—are potentially incompatible. Someone might hold that an objective idea of the human good demands that we respect X. But someone else might demand that we hold off on what we should respect until we agree on norms together. To the former person, the latter’s claim about legitimacy and authority becomes misleading.

Finally, the practical tension in Nussbaum’s CA is striking. The interpersonal approach to capability determination depends on developing *an intersubjective, “deliberative” practice that can hold the authority of collective will*. But the imaginative approach to capability determination—which we might call “*eudaimonistic*,” i.e., concerned with a vision of human flourishing—depends on developing *a personal, philosophical grasp of the human good that can carry the authority of an objective ethical truth*. What it takes to determine capabilities for human development are different practices according to the source of normativity for the CA. Someone would pursue a personal, philosophical quest for an objective idea of the human good, whereas someone else might seek to find or to cultivate a community with a practice of intersubjective deliberation on fundamental political justifications. To the former person, the latter’s focus on finding others with whom to reach an agreement is getting things backward at best. It’s not agreement that matters at first but discerning the ethical truth about human dignity.

Of course, a benign resolution to these tensions appears initially. Nussbaum appeared to mean that people would do well to enter the discussion aiming at overlapping consensus with questions such as these in mind:

- What is your view of human flourishing?
- What’s wanted for people to live dignified human lives?
- What does it take for human beings to be empowered?
- Can we think of answers to these questions as capabilities that our institutions and practices should provide?

The objectivist part of her method would then be just *a beginning* to the deliberation. It’d be a way to structure the encounter and its dialogue. The ultimate authority of what we determine, however, would flow from the deliberative process’s agreement with eventual objectivity being refined through

intersubjective critique and reasoning (cf. Khader 2011, 63–66). Then, what seemed universalistic and given by Nussbaum would be a heuristic for the effort of political dialogue. Isn't that what she meant?

But when Nussbaum involved Rawls' idea of an overlapping consensus, she deliberately meant to point to a *pragmatic* agreement about what should be protected, not about *why*. The idea of an overlapping consensus is not so deep as to dialectically weave objectivity from intersubjectivity and vice-versa. And that is not the only or main problem. What both approaches to capability determination—the Aristotelian and the neo-Rawlsian—share is the apparent *aim* of coming up with a single basic core understanding of human dignity, filled in enough that its necessary or enabling conditions in a political community can be met in the form of capabilities to which members of the community are entitled. But why must a political community share the same basic values for what it takes to live a dignified human life?

The aim of capability determination is what needs critical attention. In a brilliant paper, Rosa Terlazzo pin-pointed something that leads to this realization. She asked, *what kind of things are the capabilities?* Are they:

things owed politically to citizens, or . . . things that citizens are meant to see as the most basic elements of a good human life . . . [?]
(Terlazzo 2014, 191)

Her analysis followed Nussbaum's insistence that capabilities are politically constructed opportunities, a Rawlsian inheritance that she has come to emphasize consistently over the years.¹⁴ Yet there are parts to capabilities—"external" and "internal" components, i.e., conditions in the polity and conditions in the psychology that must be realized for someone to actually be able to X. For instance, I need to be able to associate with others freely absent a dogmatically repressive police state in order to be able to engage freely in politics—that's "external." But I also need to be able to associate interpersonally in order to be with others in that free space. I need to have the requisite social capabilities. Those are "internal."

Terlazzo realized that having the "internal" aspect of a capability was equivocal between *seeing* the value of the capability and *having the opportunity* to value what it involves. Cases such as this include being able to care for others (it would seem to imply rejecting overly self-interested views of people in the world), being able to have sexual satisfaction (it would seem to imply that one sees sex as possibly satisfying), and others. For example, suppose that I believe that caring for other people is morally mistaken. Call me a "self-reliance man." It would then seem that I cannot have the requisite internal capability

for the capability I am supposed to have as a matter of right. Why would I care for others if I saw doing that as immoral, if what I believed when I saw others in need of care is a temptation or a vice? Or suppose that I believe that sex is filthy. Suppose I think that its enjoyment is prohibited by a god. How could I be able to have sexual satisfaction, which I am supposed to be able to do by right, according to Nussbaum?¹⁵

Terlazzo calls this ambiguous area in Nussbaum's CA a "valuational requirement" on "the internal component" of some capabilities (Terlazzo 2014, 192). Her point is that Nussbaum's objectivism about human dignity remains embedded in her claims of political liberalism. There appears to be a way that people must see human dignity within her view. Someone who cannot see sex as possibly satisfying due to their values is thus rendered mistaken about the capabilities, tolerated perhaps by a liberal society but viewed by the state as not being able to use their heads well (Terlazzo 2015, 188). But that's an illiberal result:

[W]hen the state endorses a list of capabilities *as a list of truly human functionings*, it does not just disagree with those who would make the content of the list different; instead, it makes a statement at the societal level about the moral *truth* about the values that are used to structure society. (Terlazzo 2015, 188)

The problem, then, is how to protect people's capabilities inside a political community in a way that doesn't create second-class citizens based on their failure to see the "truth" of what is supposed to be morally basic to human dignity and, by extension, being human and striving. If the capabilities reflect agreements about what human dignity is, then they enshrine shared values, rather than being political tools for maintaining self-determination without the need for agreements on values. The CA then presumes a specific way of being human, rather than being a political tool to keep open collective life to self-determination, including *many* ways of being human.

The problem here is not about the source of the capability so much as what a capability is. That's the brilliant insight Terlazzo drives home. Is the CA a way of congealing agreed on values that a political community must share or *is the CA a political basis for giving people the power to value things as they see fit?* Terlazzo's criticism points away from a capability list detailing human dignity, even if agreed on, toward constructing the political conditions for self-determination. *The issue should not be whether a society conforms to the list, but whether a given political order gives people the opportunity to determine their lives as they see fit.* This is where the core question of capability determination leads.¹⁶

The question becomes, *what do we need to be able to be self-determining?* If we do not ask this question, we undermine what the CA is meant to do: to give people a chance to live a dignified human life in a pluralistic political community that can be credibly cosmopolitan, that is, inclusive of many worlds on Earth. Each of us determining our capabilities needs to ask this of ourselves—what do *I* need to be self-determined—but we also have to ask it of each other—what do *you* need to be self-determined—so that we can arrive at what *we* need to protect our respective *and* collective self-determination. If we do not proceed in this intrasubjective *and* collective way, we risk socially reproducing some form of domination whereby the capabilities protected by a given political community don't proceed from justifiable practice according to each participant in the community. There are powerful and clear questions that should structure capability determination for political communities using the CA.

In sum, what Nussbaum's CA leads to is the importance of political communities having processes in them for figuring out what people need in order to determine their own lives. Part of that process may very well be questioning what is involved in being human, striving, living well, having dignity, or some other set of concepts from other genres of being human. But the *aim* of the process must not be *one* agreed on view of being human, even if a minimal and incomplete one. Rather, it must be to structure the community politics such that many ways of living with dignity can be determined. Capability determination should be involved with the political question of the conditions of self-determination and nothing more, lest it end up dominating some people who do not happen to share the purportedly "true" view of what it means to really be human.

What Can You Learn from How Others Undergo Enduring Domination? Collective Surfacing through Connecting Communal Experience

However, the question of what we need to be self-determining isn't straight-forward because complex, enduring domination rarely is. Answering the question of what I, you, she, he, they, you all, and eventually *we* need to be self-determining depends on seeing the afterlife of domination in our lives, those complex, communally extended and variegated realities of enduring domination. If you think it's hard for yourself to surface (I do), think what it takes for "us" to do this as a community of many different standpoints, histories, and experiences of enduring domination. Hell, there ain't no "us" at all where some of us live (right here in Cleveland!).

A major problem arises when community politics is inhibited by internalized domination. If A is unable to speak freely due to years of abuse, then any collective discussion including A will paradoxically continue A's erasure. More subtly, if B adapts their preferences strongly due to years of deprivation held in place by the inertia of a history of domination within their society, then B may not imagine that they would do well with a certain capability—say, to be able to develop their mind—and so may never advocate for it. Or if C has adapted to a world where economic insecurity is ideologically rationalized and effectively maintained in political economic life through structures that suppress collective organizing and protest, then C may not consider advancing the need for basic economic security as a condition of being able to live a dignified human life. Yet in a different world where C were exposed to economic security, C might clearly think it an important capability: to live free from worry over one's very welfare. In some such way, enduring domination—again, this is what others call “oppression” (Drydyk 2021)—shapes daily expectations and thus haunts any community politics that wants to establish the conditions for self-determination.

The problem of enduring domination leads to the second practical concept of my essay and comes from Kristie Dotson's work on oppression. The unworking of enduring domination involves uncovering the extent and form of domination's afterlife in our respective and collective self-determination itself. Simply put, unless we can see the extent and form of domination's afterlife, we may not be able to fully think, act, or relate as ourselves, and this will interfere with—if not undermine—our efforts at conceptualizing the practical basis of self-determination. We won't know what to look for and to make possible.

I find it helps to contemplate—sit a long time with and think about/wonder over—a phenomenon you may have noticed or experienced. Take a discussion group, even on the block. In societies where there is well-documented, widespread, complex, and enduring domination—such as the United States of America—it nonetheless remains hard to see the range of forms and effects of enduring domination in the lives of the very people with whom you might happen to be talking in a community group. Experiences vary, and they split along the variegated fractures, fissures, or even fault-lines of the society. Someone may be struggling with patriarchy, another with racism, or a third with capitalism. These are obviously simple placeholders, too, suggesting the complexity and particularity that opens when people are finally able to tune into each other around questions like, “what do *I* need to be self-determined, and then what do *we* need?” Moreover, we cannot even assume that people *can* readily access these questions, either personally or together. One of the effects of en-

during domination is internalized fear and reasonable distrust given precarious social, economic, or political conditions.

But let us say that the discussion group has managed to be *safe*, I mean, truly. The people there are at no reasonable risk of damage from each other, and there is real trust built up in the group, albeit difficultly. Moreover, the group is not open to outside manipulation or damage in an obvious way. Then, perhaps you may have noticed or experienced that the discussion of how people's lives have been heteronomous or subject to arbitrary sway—in a word, dominated, as it comes to be said painfully often but with the clarity of a weight off the chest—how that discussion starts to *shed light across the whole along the gaps*. The participants are surprised, and their minds opened, because they had not experienced domination in such and such a way. But now that fellow person has. Then the group slowly begins to see a whole, tangled, connected, system (or a system of systems¹⁷). *The challenges to figuring out what we need to be self-determining collectively opens up with each of our stories of what it takes respectively*. Moreover, many a participant deepens or complicates their *respective* sense of self-determination's challenges for their own lives, simply because they see the complexity emerging across the group collectively.

I hope that, if you live in the still colonial world system, you have been a part of such a group—or can imagine it based on what you *wished* could have happened in your community if not what almost happened. I call the phenomenon that the example relays both “collective” and “respective” *surfacing*. Without some such thing as surfacing, it seems unlikely that *we* can create a community where there is life beyond domination, for we would not even *see* the domination in its complex afterlives.

It's therefore important to the practice of self-determination that Kristie Dotson created the concept of an “open consolidation process” to help with the real challenges of surfacing enduring domination in the world. What was her idea? In work on intersectionality, Dotson (2014) explored the implications of “multi-stable” oppression for uncovering the social situation of people.¹⁸ She looked at oppression that is varied across and is specific to the lives of different people in disparate situations within the social order. “Multi-stable” here means:

Oppression in a given society will have multiple ways one can understand it, and these multiple ways will have [a] certain ‘apodicticity.’ That is to say, one’s certainty that oppression simply is a certain way or originates from such and such a place or can be understood according to such and such an orientation, can be experientially fulfilled time and time again. . . . [O]ppression admits of a number of

interpretations and a number of manifestations and a number of conceptions. (Dotson 2014, 51)

Non-reductive, multi-stable oppression cannot be reduced to a single, general category of oppression—such as race, gender, class, or sexual orientation. Nor is it simply a combination of such categories. Rather, multi-stable oppression is non-categorical, and—at its limit—unique. The life of a black, poor, gay (wo)man seeking a sex change is not simply the life of a generic Black person, generic poor person, generic queer person, generic woman, and generic trans-womxn (and do these categories even make sense?). For one, we do not know where this person lives—in what nation, city, etc.—when they live, and a myriad of other relevant considerations. But for another, there is no generic Black person, no generic poor person, no generic gay person, no generic woman, no generic trans-womxn. The intersection of the adjectives describing this person is not additive, but points toward a perspective with unique experiences and conditions:

Intersectionality, in my account, is a conceptual tool that becomes valuable when it prompts us to work against our inclination to understand oppression as we experience it and to extend our analysis of it beyond what we ourselves can see from our particular vantage point. In other words, intersectionality's demand for the open consolidation of manifestations of oppressions pushes us to relate to the seemingly unrelatable and, in doing so, makes us expand our understanding of oppression, which is required of multistable social phenomena. . . . Without a demand for open-ended consolidation, one runs an increased risk of effecting hard-to-detect theoretical erasures. (Dotson 2014, 57)

Dotson created the concept of an “open consolidation process” to help confront epistemic injustice given the complex particularities of enduring domination as they play out in the lives of people. Her emphasis is on building up an understanding of the particularities into a more subtle and nuanced grasp of the entire network of enduring domination in a world. The effort moves in two directions: toward *individualized experiences* of oppression and toward a *social map of oppression in all its particularities*. In recounting one's experiences of enduring domination in such a way as to get right to the particularities of them, the process leads toward the individualized organization of enduring domination beyond the categories that might be used sociologically to explain it, particu-

larly in the instance where the intersection of these categories involves *erasing* the experience of the one living through the domination.¹⁹

At the same time as one individualizes the account of enduring domination, the *collective* practice of open consolidation processes also connects it via a map of the actual social structure as it is oppressive. Different people in disparate situations piece together the constrained realities of their lives in ways that are fine-grained and even unique. Such a process is open-ended: the testimonial accounts of those who grapple with their oppression continue to build up a unique picture of the variegated world in light of its varying constrictions (cf. Hartman 2019).

To connect the testimonies given within an open consolidation process is to slowly expand and nuance the picture of how a given world interferes with people's ability to live their own lives. An open consolidation process is a narrative process by which those who live through enduring domination build up the individual experience of their situation in any particularity needed to disclose the reach and form of the domination in their lives. What makes the processes "open" is that they are non-finite. As people enduring domination come to share their experiences, reflect, and build up the account of their situation, new things may come to light that should be included, and, in addition, the process may always be revisited to explore further elements of the situation and how it is structured. What can you learn from how others undergo enduring domination?

Now, recall that surfacing is the process of rediscovering one's sense of self-determination from within a context of enduring domination, including systems of enduring domination such as racism, capitalism, and patriarchy. One may not actually *be* completely self-determined in the context, but now one has one's mind for it, leeway in one's understanding of one's situation by which one might shake things looser toward more autonomy—and not just alone, but in community too. The idea I take away from Dotson's is that collective processing of enduring domination through connecting communal experience is essential for capability determination in real world, non-ideal conditions.²⁰ But this is to say that it is essential for surfacing *as* a community, too. Moreover, it seems unlikely that any complex, enduring domination can be surfaced thoroughly *personally* unless the connections and nuances of the variegated map of the society's systems of enduring domination aren't consolidated to some significant degree. How else could we know what it is to surface from the system that affects us in different ways?

Another way to put this last point is that to *collectively* determine what we need for self-determination, we have to come to terms with enduring domi-

nation in its particularities for *anyone* in the community finding their self-determination interrupted or in some other way constrained. But we also have to see how these particularities shape *our* shared political community, even if we recognize that our personal life is relatively unaffected by someone else's lived form of domination. I cannot meaningfully say that I have a *shared* political community until I am at the least open to how another's experience of domination illuminates our community from their situation of being. Even if I am incredibly privileged, I cannot enjoy a shared political community without being open to open consolidation, indeed, participating in its practice in some way when I reasonably can.

Participation, here, is actual, too, not imagined. Open consolidation processes can't be settled *a priori* by generic categories of oppression but must be developed *a posteriori* by an emerging, communal narrative of multi-stable oppression. Dotson emphasizes that this process must be seen as "continual" (Dotson 2014, 44). In being open-ended and emergent, open consolidation processes surface the lineaments of the complex domination interfering with self-determination across a political community by nuancing community politics to the many standpoints in it as its participants seek to articulate the conditions for self-determination among them. Since the process simultaneously builds up a picture of the variegated, oppressive world *and* gives people increased awareness of constrictions—and of many forms—internal to the community that they share, the practice of open consolidation helps participants work out *what it actually means* to live beyond domination with dignity for themselves and together.

I remember what it was like to come to terms with one piece of enduring domination during the 2016 election year in the Cleveland, Ohio metro region. I was part of a community discussion group held bi-weekly in the basement of Mac's Back's Books in Cleveland Heights.²¹ The focus of our emergent discussion over the year was how to determine our political responsibility during the 2016 U.S. election cycle.²² What this meant in practice is that we had, as a group, to come to terms with what we should *be able to do politically in order to participate* in our nation-state's democracy. In other words, we focused on the capability of participating politically, roughly one of the capabilities Nussbaum has found determined on her CA list over the last quarter century (Nussbaum 2001, 80).²³ We were asking ourselves what we could do in our political environment that would be something we could do in good conscience. In other words, how could we be self-determined enough to act politically with conscience during the election year?

Over the course of the year, what began to surface were the various obstacles that members of the group faced to being politically engaged in terms that they could accept, i.e., as self-determining, political beings. These obstacles ranged from being financially powerless to being racially or sexually dominated as these things appeared in the sexist, racist, and capitalist nationalism of the 2016 election cycle—and not just in one of the two major parties, but in both in different ways, as well as in the public sphere and in community discussions. The obstacles also included the particularities of people's histories in Cleveland—or sometimes elsewhere—affecting their sense of the possible and the impossible when it came to engaged citizen action and responsibility. Finally, many obstacles surfaced that were not centered in the overt discourse around the election, including environmental domination affecting future generations, complex questions of gender fluidity, and profound doubts about the viability and legitimacy of the nation state system.

In effect, the discussion group engaged unintentionally in a partial form of an open consolidation process. Through it, the members developed a much more finely grain, nuanced, and networked sense of the social reality of the world in which the 2016 elections were happening, forefronting the ways in which people were socially alienated, enduring domination's afterlife or direct reality, or otherwise unable to engage politics in good conscience in such and such ways in this or that situation or condition. Members also learned better how to think of their own reality when they left the group for the night. They developed some real agency, not something fantastic, but an actual *leeway* in the space of their lived possibilities.²⁴ That is, they developed some self-determination in the process of having spent an extended time over the year in trying to determine what they needed in order to be self-determined politically and in bringing to light and “consolidating” the variegated experiences of enduring domination that people differently underwent.

What is it Like for Us to Live Otherwise? The Art of Wondering in Norm Play

Narrating our experiences of enduring domination as Dotson has conceived is certainly powerful and needed for the community politics of self-determining what we need to be able to do in order to live our own lives as we see fit. But what of norms we have internalized that we do not recognize as part of enduring domination if only because we have not thought about how the world could make sense otherwise than how we have internalized it?²⁵ This question is central to developing a critical attitude around the coloniality of being where the ways of being human that one can unreflectively presume through accul-

turation can be part of the problem, including when they exclude other possible ways of having dignity, at least in one's mind. In cases where our narratives *internalize domination as normal*, in order to shake free enduring domination, we will need to confront other ways of being than those our norms protect. We will need to develop some free play around them, room to consider them otherwise. This is to focus on the notion of leeway in our "space of possibilities" (Nichols 2014, 46ff.; Haugeland 2013).

A broad point in this neighborhood gets at the heart of self-determination. It's doubtful that our norms *can* make sense to us deeply without our having developed some free play around them. Not just resistance to domination but *understanding* depends on considering what we hold to be true, right, good, or beautiful—and their contrasts—otherwise. Without having considered *how* something makes sense, we cannot really understand it, and without having some free play in our minds around that something so as to turn it over this way and that, we cannot see how it works or fits. There's no room to do so. It's just inert and locked in place, like a convention we unthinkingly follow. To say we even "believe" it strains the meaning of belief.

The suggestion here is that the life of living with how things make sense depends on considering their possibilities of being otherwise, at least to some degree, and that this capability is needed just as much when uncovering enduring domination.²⁶ The mind's cognitive agency links understanding to surfacing, not just instrumentally but in the form of the mind. To understand is already to develop some ability to surface. But this capability to turn things over in our mind and to discover the space around them, moving them in the free play of their possibilities is the capability of wondering.²⁷ In such a light, the problem of whether or not we can wonder about our norms is important for self-determination *generally* (as well as particularly in contexts of enduring domination²⁸).

It's here that it's helpful to consider how to cultivate what Foucault (1996; Bendik-Keymer 2023, 118–120²⁹) called a "critical attitude" around the norms rationalizing and reproducing domination, namely by learning how to wonder about them. But what is it to learn how to have a critical attitude of wondering about our norms? This leads me to Chloë Bass's social practice art where the practice of wondering and norm subversion are intertwined with self-determination. I think that her practice can show how wondering is part of understanding, how understanding is part of self-determining, and how wondering can be a practice of engaging with ordinary life in a way that plays with, or subverts, its norms.

What is wondering, though? Wondering is:

an intentional action (for someone “to wonder”), *a practice* (“to make people wonder”), or *a settled character disposition* (a habit of “wondering,” even a “wondering” temperament) *that seeks to explore possibilities of sense and meaning at precisely the point where one becomes lost in trying to make sense of things.* (Bendik-Keymer 2023, motet 1; 2021, 2022)³⁰

In this essay, I speak exclusively of wondering rather than of “wonder,” something that I technically mark as a *background condition* of the mind’s openness to sense and meaning. Wondering is the active form of wonder, the way intentionality can draw on people’s capacity to wonder.

Making sense of things always depends on some minimal degree of wonder, i.e., the mind’s openness around the sense and meaning of things enough to be able to understand them in the space of semantic and logical possibilities. Making sense of things depends on letting the possibilities of things play out and in entertaining how things could make sense or be meaningful otherwise than they seem to do or to be. Nussbaum understands this free play of the mind as a basic, non-narcissistic capacity (Nussbaum 2001, 189–191 especially).³¹ One has to suspend one’s stake in what things mean or how they make sense to wonder well about them. We have to let our minds go. You might even say that being lost in wonder is the life of wondering.³²

Such a political headspace takes meaning as open, not closed, and sense as pregnant, even if elusive. This is so especially when one finds oneself lost. Then wondering becomes positive tarrying with the negative, so to speak, the suspension of understanding in search of how things fail to make sense, how they could be otherwise, what could make sense and why—and so on. All this prefigures meaningfulness and sense-making as more than what is in one’s grasp, out there to be discovered by further experiment, discussion, or encounter: elusive.³³

Remember how Dotson showed that to understand oppression well demands openness to the unique ways in which it can show up or be experienced—the unique ways that it can appear in people’s varied lives. To be able to understand complex domination in the world demands being able to bring together many different experiences and understandings of enduring domination without reducing them to one or another presumed category of domination. It takes a lot of connections to grasp oppressions.³⁴ In such a light, practices of wondering are well-suited to uncover complex domination as a *collective effort*, too.

Some moments in Chloë Bass's social practice art deepen the sense of openness that we saw prefigured in Dotson's idea of an open consolidation process. The expression "social practice art" refers to an established form of art practice in which the norms of social orders are the objects of artistic practice (Sholette et al. 2018³⁵). What makes social practice art powerful for self-determination is that it engages deliberately with the co-construction of norms so that people can begin to have a space to consider them. As Bass's does, social practice art can construct situations and processes in which people have the space to consider how their lives might be otherwise and how others' lives are different than their own. Social practice art then practices norm subversion at the same time as it practices self-determination of an ordinary, low-key sort. I see such art as a species of the practice of wondering.³⁶

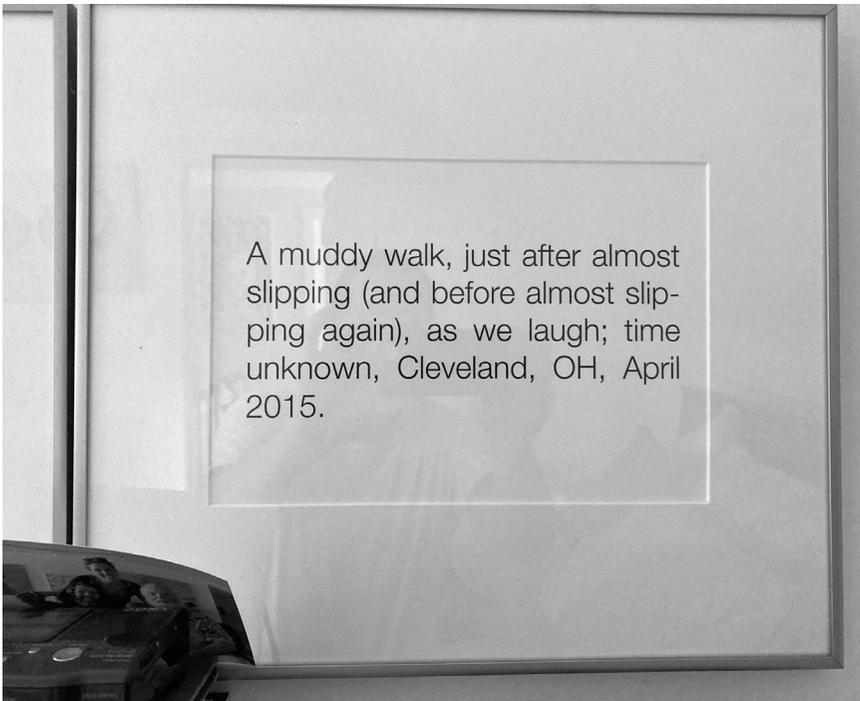


Figure 1. Right half of a diptych marking a time in Bass's social practice intervention, "you+ me together" (chapter 1 of The Book of Everyday Instruction, Cleveland, Ohio, 2015), with my late mom Esther's note-to-self tape-recorder below it and a family photo. Thanks to the artist for permission to reproduce this image.

By making norms the subject of consideration, social practice art is essentially an art of *world consolidation*. It does not so much as "make" a world as

help us consolidate our sense of it for ourselves and with each other, mainly, by helping us wonder about what makes sense and what *could* make sense and why.³⁷ The way it does this is by making social norms an object of play and of decision. In so doing, social practice art opens a space to consider what ought to be and why it ought to be, why people might decide on given norms, decide on other norms, or decide against given norms. Social practice art is thus built around people considering why others do what they do, as well as why one might do what one does—and how one finds that these things make sense, or possibly don't. The art form is potent for constructing an open consolidation process and for bringing to view how our worlds are constructed, including the implied ways of being human animating people's lives.

Let's look at one social practice intervention by Bass, the first chapter of her project, *The Book of Everyday Instruction*, called "you + me together." It took place originally in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, OLOMN during the spring of 2015 and was displayed and processed by its make-shift community during that summer. Before I explain it, however, it helps to briefly contextualize it within Bass's long-term project.

Bass is building a series of projects that examine relationships starting from self-relationship, then up through dyads, families, neighborhoods, and onto even a small town and—ultimately—the city of New York, her hometown (if she is able to one day).³⁸ *The Bureau of Self-Recognition* (2011–2014) was a set of social experiments done by participants in their own spaces and then, otherwise, together. In activities constructed by Bass, people experimented with what it means to try to recognize oneself. The title of the project refers to a collective moment of the entire process when participants came to an office in which self-recognition was explored and discussed. That was the "bureau" of self-recognition.

The project was playful and often funny, but underneath it some heavy themes surfaced: depression, anxiety, and moments of purposelessness and voicelessness. Bass described the project as emerging out of a period of her own self-searching.³⁹ The combination was effective—intellectual, reflective, comical, serious, real, and often surprisingly deep, yet done in a work-personly manner, a matter-of-fact way. The core value animating the project was autonomy, and the absence of a space for being presumptive or judgmental was notable. The question of what it is to recognize oneself animated the entire process practically and relationally, rather than theoretically, using more than words, but also images, music, and motion.⁴⁰

The Book of Everyday Instruction (2015–2018) was the second step in the project that began with self-recognition. It explored "intimacy."⁴¹ In eight separate

exercises called “chapters,” Bass took up the question of how dyads are dyads, the norms that shape them, and the norms and forms of intimate, dyadic relationship that are desirable in different contexts. Her chapter’s topics did not shy away from difficulty and oppression, although they were still animated by levity and a matter-of-fact approach. Fear of strangers, routine and what it is to dislodge it, segregation and its traces in the U.S. South, safety and policing; “proxemics” (ways of setting space between people) and feelings of aggression, fear, attraction, or interest; surveillance and privacy, and others were some of the explicit foci of the experiments in the eight “chapters” of the “book.” Exercises explored the norms around dyads in a number of ways sensitive to extant forms of resistance and possible oppression. Yet the presumption was not that people are oppressed. Rather, the processes Bass set up allowed people to play at being otherwise, to wonder about the norms that shaped their lives, including their histories and contingencies, and to consider how relationships might be.⁴²

Chapter I of this project, “you + me together,” took place in Cleveland over several months. Through a variety of listservs and message boards, Bass got out the word that she wanted to fill in for one part of the dyad in a person’s life for part of a day, provided that it would not be romantic, sexual, or dangerous. She then spent weeks being the second in a wide range of people’s lives at work, in leisure, and in a variety of activities. She did this with a rigorous protocol of respect and interest that she shared with those sharing time with her (and later with the public). As Bass spent time with the those who generously included her in their lives, they discussed or otherwise centered the activity and the shape of people’s lives.

Bass additionally marked the shared time with a variety of annotation devices—Polaroids of the experience (see *figure 2* below), notes that capture the time in a short memory (*figure 1*), things that were picked up during the time (such as tickets, natural objects, things bought at the store, etc.), and so on. The gallery reflection of the project, later that spring and into the summer, was a public archive of the dyadic experiences. In addition to allowing visitors to piece together the experiences fragmentarily, it included a number of communal meetings where the people who had been directly involved in the project with Bass could reflect on what they experienced and found from it.

That was it. Simple? But what participants expressed is that the extraordinary intervention into ordinary life was subtly enlivening for them. Many participants said that they looked at their lives and intimate relationships anew as a result of having a respectful and interested stranger go through their ordinary routine with them. Ordinary life became strange and wonderful, and

these folks thought about their lives somewhat differently as a result—not in some big, dramatic way, but as when a breeze ruffles through the world turning things slightly this way and that. In a word, the participants recognized themselves as marginally freer as a result of the practice.⁴³

Bass's participatory project was encounter-filled, but not sentimentally. A central element was *play*. By flexing one's life to include a stranger in place of a trusted dyad and by reflecting on one's intimate ordinary relationships, leeway was opened up inside ordinary routine by which one could consider that very same routine otherwise. The practice was a kind of *make-believe* that itself focused on what one actually does and why. It had the effect of concretizing one's ordinary life by making it strange enough to bring into view the details. One could then ask—or *feel*—"what if?"

In this way, playing with norms became a practiced way to consider why one's life in one's world is the way it is and how it could be otherwise. What is it like for us to live otherwise? Bass's process emphasized reflection, sharing across group exploration, and the absence of a presumed answer as to what norms can govern a situation to meaningful purpose. At the same time, the deliberate construction involved in her process and the ever-present awareness of considering how norms could be otherwise, combined with a sense of the meaningfulness of social life, suggested that people might have more agency than they think right in their immediate lives if only they decide to find ways to play with the minute possibilities in them so as to produce wondering and thoughtfulness at the center of the ordinary. In this way, Bass's process was a practice of wondering that contributed to people figuring out for themselves how they might want to live as they see fit *and* how others happen to live as *they* see fit. Wondering was a formal feature of the social practice, built into its process.

Think then of the other chapters of *The Book of Everyday Instruction*, which focused explicitly in some cases on enduring domination and distrust. For people who might be stuck in a rut or struggling with voicelessness, silencing or invisibility, Bass's grappling with fundamental social units and relations combined with her awareness of social-historical resistances and inherited forms of oppression could give participants the opportunity to *consolidate* how marginalization or adaption to bad situations might settle into people's lives. The art would allow people to playfully experience their world as structured by enduring domination *and* in revealing the ordinary structure of domination's enduring afterlife, would allow them to imagine life beyond domination in very quotidian and minute ways that have the feel of the life just around them where they really live. There wouldn't be utopian epiphanies here but small

spaces, subtle actions, meaningful intimate relationships where something gives (because it *has* to give in this fucked-up world, doesn't it?).

Sometimes the path to self-determination comes quiet and small. Tinkering with one small norm can be world-*shaking*, as when a brave person decided not to ride at the back of the bus. This trembling of our world depends on seeing how things could be otherwise, shaking worthwhile possibilities free. But that leeway in our world is none other than the achievement of wondering. Without it, not only do we remain stuck in place, but we cannot meaningfully say that what we do we do because we have considered how it makes deep sense to us. Bass's norm-play gives us a way to consolidate our world's enduring domination so that we can better see what we need in order to determine ourselves and live as we see fit.

This Rigged Together, Decolonial Tool

Using the seemingly mainstream discourse of the CA, I've wanted to construct the basic rig of a decolonial option for self-determination. It could be another tool in our kit for dismantling the master's house, a tool of a different kind than delinking.⁴⁴ Rather than suggest ways to create a rupture with the coloniality of being, I have wanted to use social justice discourses and social engagement culture in such a way as to sketch the broad outlines of a multi-dimensional practice of self-determination that can make domination *tremble*. The way this works is not by epistemic rejection of an entire world's dominant way of being but by creating epistemic *movement* in the fabric of the everyday through real and imagined forms of community discourse—what I have called “community politics” broadly construed. In such movement, a space around the given authority of our norms develops—an ongoing critical attitude.

The links between the two concepts and one cultural example from this essay should be seen as ideas for the construction of a community-based practice. Nussbaum's problematic of capability determination can provide a philosophically-interested community with something to reflect on and discuss around a core, driving question: what do we need—respectively and collectively—in order to be self-determining? The CA may help structure that discourse, or it may simply lead a discussion group to reflect on the ways they want to run with the question. Nussbaum's Aristotelian question about how we want to understand human dignity provides a rich source for getting in view for each member of the discussion what self-determination must make possible, and the essential goal of working out agreement *and disagreement* around that question provides already the rough terms of engagement for the group's dialogue.

What Dotson's concept of an open consolidation process adds is yet again a discourse for a group to discuss as it takes up—or sees if it wants to broach—the heavy work of surfacing enduring domination in its variegated, community landscape. As I hope is clear, capability determination remains fairly idealistic and potentially superficial unless it engages with the deformative effects of enduring domination on how we face our lives. Moving into open consolidation, though sensitive and demanding at once, promises to open up a *realistic* understanding of what is needed for self-determination in one's community at the same time as it is likely to generate increased social understanding and even some degrees of gained trust. Where I'm from, I think of this as “deep” politics, this going beneath policy debates and ideologies to discuss the real situations of actual people in one's community as folks wrestle with enduring domination.

Finally, connection to Chloë Bass's work is more suggestive than conceptual, but helped me, at least, *see*—i.e., intuit—the kinds of inventiveness that are possible when constructing community practices of surfacing that actually speak to the details of people's ordinary lives while never leaving behind wonder and thoughtfulness, both alone and together. It's no small thing to reconnect with the sometimes merely intellectual realization that our social norms are contingent. Actually changing our lives can dislodge a lot, especially when the changes are structured toward surfacing. I imagine that it is not enough even to share our narratives of oppression and to consolidate them. That heavy talk, meaningful though it undoubtedly is when done in trust, still stays stuck in the memories, pain, and angry realizations. To get up and do something that makes the world fresh, to turn to creative subtlety and irony, to see that the revolution is not televised are often very good things. It's not the actual, human barricade that we may need to throw down before the pipeline's earthmovers, but it *is* a way to redirect the circulation of senselessness that is all too normalized in societies of enduring domination.⁴⁵

My point is thus practical and relational even more than it is theoretical. I've repurposed theoretical discourses so as to show how they might suggest ways to organize community discussion and practice in a place such as where I'm from. I am thinking out loud about something I hope to do here someday in the not-too-distant future, and I intend this article as a talk-piece to help the community I'd be lucky to participate in work out for itself the kinds of collective practices it might want to foster. My hope is that this piece may also be useful to readers elsewhere who are using theory in practice and who seek to consolidate authentically good relationships among people wanting to live their lives as they make sense beyond domination.



Figure 2. Left half of a diptych marking a time in Bass's social practice intervention, "you+ me together" (chapter 1 of *The Book of Everyday Instruction*, Cleveland, Ohio, 2015); the photo is of a Polaroid taken during the experience being remembered, held in Bass's hand in her Cleveland backyard. What's it take for "us" to surface? Thanks to the artist for permission to reproduce this image.

Jeremy Bendik-Keymer teaches at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, USA.⁴⁶ He is author of *Involving Anthroponomy in the Anthropocene: On Decoloniality* (Routledge 2020), *The Wind ~ An Unruly Living* (Punctum Books 2018), *Solar Calendar, and Other Ways of Marking Time* (Punctum Books 2017), *Ethical Adaptation to Climate Change: Human Virtues of the Future* (MIT Press 2012), *The Ecological Life: Discovering Citizenship and a Sense of Humanity* (Rowman & Littlefield 2006).

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ENDNOTES

1. Caption to one of the installation diptychs in Bass (2015).
2. Walter D. Mignolo calls these core elements of the Colonial Matrix of Power (“CMP”).
3. This is a modification of the substance of how domination is understood in Pettit (1997). For reasons that I have explained elsewhere (Bendik-Keymer 2023, 4–6), I do not find Pettit’s recent reconceptualization of domination in *On the People’s Terms* to be compelling.
4. Jay Drydyk (2021) thinks that oppression can persist in the absence of present domination. In that, he is right. But oppression is domination’s afterlife: it depends on people who have adapted to not trying things out in the domains of oppression. All it takes is one uppity person (and the organizers behind her) who will not stay in place to show how oppression depends on a history of domination: for instance, Rosa Parks.
5. This view follows from my assumption that people who are not dominated will, beginning as children, call for what they think they need and attempt to act on their agency. Oppressive conditions that involve people getting by with deprivation when there are social means to meet their needs depend on people having been “smacked down” at some point such that their self-determination has been curtailed around what they perceive that they need and, even more, around the reasonable, moral demand to justify social arrangements with and for all involved in or affected by them.
6. For a helpful discussion of how “genres” precede colonial “genders,” see Curry (2017, Introduction).
7. What I will argue for in this paper is a contribution to the discussion of practices of wondering extending through much of the second half of the longest part of the book: motet 3 on honesty, isonomy, and wonder.
8. This includes thought about the non-human as part of understanding what it is to express human dignity (Bendik-Keymer 2020, 2021).
9. To explore how Earth beings involve human being and some such thing as “dignity” would take me too far afield of this essay. However, it would involve understanding how what I call “thoughts of Earth” can be part of a sense of humanity by way of what I have technically called “analogical implication” (Bendik-Keymer 2006, lectures 4 and 9).
10. A decolonial “option” that is a co-option (cf. Mignolo and Walsh, 2019).
11. On how the CA is a species of human rights approaches to social justice, see Nussbaum (2006).
12. These are Serene J. Khader’s (2001, chapter 1) friendly amendments to what is called Nussbaum’s “perfectionism” (substantive view of the human good) in Khader’s version of a “deliberative perfectionist approach” to human development.
13. Both of these methods are on display in the opening, foundational chapter of Nussbaum (2000, chapter 1, section IV and VII).

14. In “The Perfectionism of Nussbaum’s Adaptive Preferences,” Terlazzo (2014) discusses how Nussbaum drifts away from the Aristotelian “perfectionism” and toward the Rawlsian political liberalism in her own account (cf. Nussbaum 2011). The Aristotelianism that has really emerged in Nussbaum’s work in the twenty-first century is not about the nature of the CA but about its potential extension to all forms of life that are worthy of what Aristotle called “awe” (Nussbaum 2022).
15. Of course, examples such as these might invite immediate cries of neurosis, pathology, “alienated” social conditioning, and “stunting.” The discourse around “adaptive preference formation” appears at just the moment when it appears that the “internal” component of capabilities is problematic. Adaptive preferences are the place where the tension between perfectionism (the Aristotelian moment in Nussbaum’s work) and political liberalism (the moment of “overlapping consensus”) comes into focus. It is mainly in the “internal component” of capabilities where adaptive preference worries arise. For instance, one might worry whether the person really is free to explore her bodily relations if she does not value sex. See Nussbaum (2000, chapter 2), and Khader (2011). Terlazzo’s paper helped me see this point.
16. Terlazzo also makes this shift: Capabilities that rise to the surface in a given polity’s difficult discussions should be seen as merely *pragmatic* to keep open autonomy, not as reflections of consensus on what it is needed for being fully human, human flourishing, or for the good life.
17. Again, please recall the CMP as a placeholder for the kind of complexity I am signaling in this section.
18. In discussing Dotson’s article, I will stick with the language of “oppression,” reverting to my preferred usage—“enduring domination”—only when I move back to the use I am making of Dotson’s idea in my own argument.
19. For one kind of case missed by the sociology of intersectionality, see Curry (2020). Dotson’s idea goes beyond Curry’s intent, however, in that it potentially reaches into individual stories beyond the creation of a new category of study, such as critical masculinity studies, Black male studies, or Buck studies.
20. One anonymous reviewer of this article suggested that the direction of the argument here points toward the kind of context-dependent capability determination that animates the CA of Amartya Sen (2011, chapters 7 and 18).
21. I discuss this group in Bendik-Keymer (2023, 153ff.; 2019) and in several on-line opinion pieces.
22. The term “emergent” comes from early childhood education where curriculum is not set in advance but emerges from the dialogically determined interests of the group (Scheinfeld et al. 2008).
23. Capability 10, “Control over one’s environment,” including one’s *political* environment. See also Nussbaum (2011, 34): capability “10.A. *Political*.”
24. The concept of leeway comes from the work of Nichols (2014, 46), where Nichols discusses Heidegger’s concept of *Spielraum*, or “play-room”/“room to play” in in-

terpreting the possibilities in one situation. I discuss the idea in Bendik-Keymer (2023, 86).

25. What, for example, of hermeneutic injustice, e.g., when a way of making sense is erased within someone's normalized universe (Fricker 2007, chapter 7)?
26. An earlier version of this paper approached part of this issue in part I of the paper through the literature on adaptive preferences where having choice options that are understood is crucial for identifying when a preference is *not* adaptive. But I chose not to enter into the literature there since having free play around our norms is a broader concern, eventually being an element of self-determination generally that wondering provides. In other words, the issue of norm-play is more basic than the problem of adaptive preferences.
27. At this point in the paper, I am using capability language in a way that is my own (or my own "CA"), not just how Nussbaum might use it. Nevertheless, Nussbaum does think that the capability to wonder "biocentrically" (i.e., about what makes sense for living beings) is on *her* "capability list" (Nussbaum 2017, 2022).
28. E.g., when considering norms of how to be dignified, say, as a *man*, or as a *sexual being*, see Curry (2020) on how important the critique of gender norms is to getting at the underlying coloniality of being in which the genre of being human is presumed along racist and sexed lines that serve to dominate specific populations.
29. With reference to Sara Ahmed and Lynne Huffer's approaches to similar critical orientations.
30. Nussbaum (2017, 2022) has agreed to key parts of this account in print. For sympathetic, contrastive views of wonder, see Schinkel (2021), Glaveanu (2020), and Lloyd (2018).
31. See my analysis in Bendik-Keymer (2023, setting and motet 1).
32. The centrality of wondering to Nussbaum's tacit understanding of politics is striking once one looks for it. For instance, Nussbaum holds that politics must involve an open-minded consideration of what striving *could* involve for the living, which she finds in Aristotle's philosophical outlook on everything (Nussbaum 2006, part 3.iii). She even thinks that wondering must be basic to the scene of justice—e.g., to Rawls's Original Position (Nussbaum 2017, and Bendik-Keymer 2017). Concerned with justice, we must consider how our lives are what they are, which involves how they could be otherwise, being actual in a space of possibilities.
33. Nussbaum (2021) links the vice of what she calls "objectification" to what she calls "pride." But pride is here the word, inspired by Dante's *Inferno*, for what she explicitly also calls "narcissism." So, objectification is the vice of narcissism when it comes to moral relationships. As wondering is to narcissism, so moral (respectful) encounter is to (dominating) objectification.
34. The dangers Dotson addressed are of being categorical and of being presumptive. She pushes back against reduction. Wondering clearly counteracts that. Moreover, wondering does so in a way that does not risk reactivity—what Martin Luther King Jr. (2010, 26, chapter II: Black Power) called the "bitterness" of realizing how oppression appears and which understandably leads to other forms of categorical

thinking. When we wonder, we keep space around our judgments and so do not simply let ourselves be driven by them (Bendik-Keymer 2023, motet 1). The idea came from Scheinfeld et al. (2008).

35. Contrast this with Wolterstorff (2015), where Wolterstorff does not focus on norm play and subversion as the focus of social practice art.
36. For a historical overview of practices of wondering, see Vasalou (2016, 121–167).
37. Contrast world-consolidation with the idea of world-making (cf. Táiwò 2022, who draws heavily on Getachew 2019). Although I cannot make the argument here, my intuition is that world-making carries traces of coloniality within it, whereas world-consolidation is decolonial. Malcom Ferdinand's (2022, part IV) "worldship" strikes me as a consolidation process through radical encounter with the "pluriverse" of ways people make sense of their lives and this home planet. Ferdinand writes of:

a movement towards the other, a movement of *encounter*. This movement is no longer determined by moving towards a fantasized object that is to be reached and grasped . . . but by a horizon. One sets out toward the horizon of otherness without ever being able to reach it, a going towards the other, a going towards the world. (199–200)

Ferdinand's Francophone phenomenological language is evocative, characteristic of the voice and feeling of his book. We might recognize in it the unmistakable marks of a way of being in the world opposed to, moving differently than, *narcissism*, including in the complex formations of enduring domination that circulate through social reproduction in the CMP. What are these marks? They are (1) a resistance to objectification, and so a preservation of self-determination, and (2) the infinity of continually relating and making sense through relationship, and so an open-ended process of complex understanding of the world we share, potentially as a cosmopolitan political community in some as-yet-unarticulated sense. Both marks display a wondering practice made into a way of life.

38. See chloebass.com for all three interlocking projects.
39. Personal discussion, Cleveland, Ohio, May 2015.
40. Kinesthetic intelligence is a persistent feature of Bass's work.
41. See chloebass.com, esp. the description for "Obligations to Others Hold Me in Place."
42. One of Bass's next projects in the long-range series on relationships is *Obligations to Others Hold Me in Place* (2018–). It continues where Bass left off, moving to explore the norms binding families, not just dyads, together. The exploration is especially pertinent to reconsidering moral education, parental authority, domestic harmony and violence, and the subtle, psycho-dynamic ways in which people might find that they poorly adapt to what life could be for them. Bass's projects beyond *Obligations* move in ever wider circles—to a neighborhood, a small town (in South Dakota), and eventually, she hopes, to New York City itself.
43. Personal notes, SPACES Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio, May and June 2015.

44. On decolonial “options” and “delinking,” see again Mignolo and Walsh (2019) and Mignolo (2021).
45. I take the expression “redirect” from conversation with Stephen M. Rich on philosophical and martial arts during summer 2022.
46. “Once Land of Many Nations.” Case Western Reserve University lies on land ceded under force from 1100 chiefs and warriors at the Treaty of Greenville (1795). This treaty was subsequently dishonored and violated.

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