PRAGMATISM, GROWTH, AND DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

Wesley C. Dempster

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Committee:

Don Callen, Advisor

Montana Miller
Graduate Faculty Representative

James Campbell

Albert Dzur

Kevin Vallier

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ABSTRACT

Don Callen, Advisor

This dissertation defends an ideal of democratic citizenship inspired by John Dewey's theory of human flourishing, or "growth." In its emphasis on the interrelatedness of individual development and social progress, Deweyan growth orients us toward a morally substantive approach to addressing the important question of how diverse citizens can live together well. I argue, however, that Dewey's understanding of growth as a process by which conflicting interests, beliefs, and values are integrated into a more unified whole—both within the community and within the self—is inadequate to the radical pluralism characteristic of contemporary liberal democratic societies. Given the pragmatist insight into the crucial role of socialization in identity formation, the problem with conceptualizing the ideal self as an integrated unity is that, for many, the complexity and diversity of our social world presents an insuperable obstacle to sustaining a unified (or always unifying) self. Most of us have multiple "selves" forged by the various groups with whom we identify and the often incongruous roles we play in our personal, professional, and/or public lives. Hence I offer a reconstruction of Deweyan growth that accounts for persistent yet positively valued diversity, both within the self and within the community. On the view I urge, which draws on the work of neopragmatist Richard Rorty and Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa, divisions within the self and between citizens are not merely problems always to be overcome, but potential resources for creating a stronger, more inclusive democracy.

For Tereza and Eliot

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INTRODUCTION

Pragmatism emerged in the in the late nineteenth century United States in the thought of philosophers such as Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. The central claim these thinkers share is expressed in the "pragmatic maxim," according to which the meaning of a statement or proposition rests on the practical consequences of acting on its acceptance. In his seminal essay, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," Peirce illustrates this maxim in his claim that "what we mean by calling a thing *hard*" is the expectation we have that, if tested, "it will not be scratched by many other substances" (1878, p. 57). At pragmatism's core, then, is a rejection of the firm distinction between knowledge and experience, an insistence on the continuity between theory and practice that lends itself to applications in social and political philosophy. Indeed, as I hope to show, pragmatism offers a powerful set of conceptual resources for rethinking democracy in our present time of civil discord.

Racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other systemic forms of oppression continue to stand in the way of fully realizing the basic democratic ideals of freedom and equality. In short, our society is divided against itself. As citizens, we do not trust each other or the government, and, consequently, we are unable or unwilling to cooperatively meet the challenges that confront us. Instead of working across our ideological differences to forge a more inclusive democratic community, we tend either to cloister ourselves within homogeneous social enclaves or to distract ourselves from our social ills by indulging in narcissistic and/or consumerist activities.

Pragmatism—especially Dewey's brand of social pragmatism, as I will argue—offers another way. In addition to stressing the practical consequences of our ideas, Dewey offers a relational conception of the democratic citizen/self that dissolves the self-other and individual-

community oppositions that we have inherited from the classical liberal tradition.[1] These oppositions undermine the social trust and cooperation that are essential to the vitality of a pluralistic democratic community.

Dewey's pragmatic conception of democratic citizenship is embedded in a naturalized view of human beings consistent with the Darwinian insight that we are, as Richard Posner puts it, "merely clever animals" (2003, p. 4). On this view, mind does not inhere in a separate (semi-divine) substance, such as the soul, but develops organically with human biological and social life. Human intelligence, therefore, is not a special faculty that puts us in touch with an ultimate or transcendent reality, such as Plato's realm of Ideal Forms; rather, our intellectual capabilities are adaptive tools for coping with and controlling our shared physical and social environment. Thus, in our pursuit of a more perfect politics, we cannot appeal to the authority of philosopher-kings who claim to have glimpsed the Ideal Form of Justice. For pragmatists like Dewey, "knowledge" (or "warranted assertability," to use his preferred term) is contextual, as it is grounded in contingent local and historical circumstances rather than in universally valid *a priori* truths or in unmediated perceptions of reality. This Darwinian social epistemology emphasizes the role of communicative transactions aimed at addressing shared problems in the production of knowledge.

Pragmatist epistemology is fallibilistic and anti-foundationalist; it denies that there are transcendent foundations that can support our beliefs and immunize us from error. Knowledge, then, is not anchored in anything outside of or beyond the contingent practices of communities of

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[1] As Gerald Gaus notes, "classical liberals" such as John Locke "share a vision of men as essentially independent, private and competitive beings who see civil associations mainly as a framework for the pursuit of their own interests," whereas "modern liberals" such as Dewey "stress mutual dependence over independence, co-operation over competition, and mutual appreciation over private enjoyment" (p. 7). See Dewey's discussion of classical liberalism in *Liberalism and Social Action* (*LW* 2, pp. 5-22).

inquirers. This places pragmatism in opposition to metaphysical realism, insofar as realism holds that a proposition or belief is true if and only if it corresponds to an external world independent of human interpretive activities (see Putnam 1990a, pp. 327-9). This form of realism leads directly to skepticism and nihilism, since it is impossible to get outside of our own embodied and culturally situated perspective to check whether our beliefs match up with unfiltered reality. Pragmatism sidesteps skepticism and nihilism by insisting that our epistemic concepts (such as truth, knowledge, or justified belief) must be effective in guiding our actual practices. Importantly, in rejecting metaphysical realism, pragmatists also reject the sharp distinction realists draw between scientific inquiry (viewed as "objective") and moral or political inquiry (viewed as "subjective"). In a democracy, citizens form a community of inquirers who aim, not to discover the nature of an ideal society, but rather to resolve problematic situations that actually affect the public.

Pragmatists seek to avoid the excesses of objectivism and subjectivism by replacing the notion of objectivity with a concept of inter-subjective agreement that places scientific inquiry and moral inquiry on the same epistemic footing. This move overturns the individualistic Cartesian epistemology of the isolated knower in favor of a socialized epistemology that stresses the public nature and function of knowledge. For pragmatists like Peirce and Dewey, we validate our claims not by checking them against reality directly (which we cannot do), but by putting them up for public scrutiny. Just as the scientific community determines the validity of individual scientists' claims about the physical world, the social groups we belong to determine the validity of our moral and political claims. Following Peirce and Dewey, some pragmatists (notably Cheryl Misak, Robert Talisse, and Hilary Putnam) have taken from this point an epistemological *justification* for democratic politics. These pragmatists claim that the best way to

settle political disputes is through free and open discussion of issues and problems confronting the public. On this view, democracy is not a system for aggregating pre-formed opinions in order to reveal an underlying and antecedently formed "general will." Instead, democracy is conceived as a mode of association that actively shapes the preferences and values of participants in deliberation by exposing them to competing viewpoints until, at last, a consensus emerges on laws and policy decisions.

In keeping with the tenets of Darwinian evolution, pragmatists are anti-essentialists and thus reject social or political theories that appeal to a fixed human nature (see Dewey *MW* 4, p. 3-14). For example, humans are neither essentially egoistic nor essentially altruistic. To view persons as "naturally" selfish or "naturally" altruistic fails to account for the social conditioning that shapes human nature. Such traits depend on the character of actual relations between particular humans and their local physical and social environment. That is, pragmatists stress the social and ecological nature of the self. They view human nature as malleable and adaptive. Just as biological evolution depends on genetic diversity, social progress depends on cultural diversity. No individual or group has privileged access to the "Truth." This anti-essentialism and anti-authoritarianism resonates well with democratic politics, as it provides an important critical lever against totalitarian or fundamentalist social organizations that claim for a select few the authority—based on their superior access to the "Truth" about what a human being is or ought to be—to impose a single conception of morality on the rest of us.

Of the original pragmatists, Dewey was most especially attentive to the social and political consequences of these ideas. Peirce, a logician and mathematician, was more narrowly interested in epistemology, while James, a psychologist, focused on the subjective phenomenology of individual experience. Dewey, however, championed a conception of

participatory democracy that deemphasizes its institutional dimension as a form of government and instead emphasizes its personal and social dimensions. He observed that the realization of democracy's moral ideals of freedom and equality requires a culture of mutual respect and openness between interdependent but diverse citizens negotiating a shared physical and social environment with the aim of achieving personal and social growth. In so doing, he calls us to direct our attention to the habits and attitudes required for effective democratic citizenship.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I explicate Dewey's approach to democratic citizenship and argue for the centrality of growth in his theory. For Dewey, growth is a process by which experienced differences are progressively unified, both within the community and within the self, into ever-greater wholes. Conflicting values are adjusted to each other until they are more harmoniously integrated. Crucially, Dewey argues that growth constitutes "the only moral 'end'" (*MW* 12, p. 181). Although this notion of growth represents a powerful attempt to overcome divisions that are destructive of community life, it also has totalizing implications that are deeply problematic from a democratic perspective. In conceptualizing the ideal self as a harmonious whole, Dewey participates in a discourse of the self that goes back at least as far as Plato, who viewed the ideal self as one whose rational, spirited, and appetitive faculties form a well-ordered unity. This view survives today, most notably, in so-called "real-self" theories such as Harry Frankfurt's (1988) and Gary Watson's (1986), which insist on the coherence of the self as a condition for free will or autonomy.[2]

Given the pragmatist insight into the important role that socialization plays in identity formation, the problem with conceptualizing the self as an integrated whole is that the

[2] On "real-self" theories, only actions that reflect the harmoniously integrated commitments and values of a unified self count as free or autonomous. Interestingly, Watson locates a real-self theory of autonomy in Dewey's writings (Watson 2004, p. 260-1).

complexity and diversity of our social world makes it difficult, if not impossible, to sustain a unified self. Most of us have multiple "selves"[3] forged by the various groups with whom we identify and the often incongruous roles we play in our personal, professional, and/or public lives. Hence I gesture toward a reconstruction of Deweyan growth that accounts for ineliminable and positively valued diversity both within the democratic citizen/self and within the democratic community. I cite the testimony of Chicana feminists Gloria Anzaldúa and Maria Lugones, which clearly shows not only that some identities shaped by conflicting cultures cannot be wholly integrated, but also that maintaining such plural identities within ourselves can play a constructive role in facilitating productive democratic engagement across difference. An important implication of the reconstructed account of growth I offer is that members of privileged social groups, such as affluent white males, can become better democratic citizens by following Anzaldúa and Lugones's lead—opening themselves to transformative interactions with members of other social groups and embracing the multiplicitous aspects of their own unfolding identities, thus contributing to their personal growth, the growth of their sub-groups, and the growth of the larger community.

In the second chapter, I compare Dewey's thick account of democratic citizenship with neopragmatist Richard Rorty's thin ideal of the "liberal ironist," who seeks to create public solidarity on the standard bourgeois liberal values while privatizing her idiosyncratic differences.

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[3] The concept of plural or multiple identities or selves, as I use it in this dissertation, should not be confused with the condition that had been known as Multiple Personality Disorder and is now termed Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). In the case of DID, the sufferer experiences a disruption of identity "characterized by two or more distinct personality states" that "involves marked discontinuity in the sense of self and sense of agency," including "gaps in the recall of everyday events, important personal information, and/or traumatic events that are inconsistent with ordinary forgetting" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It is normal, however, for psychologically healthy adults in pluralistic societies like ours to negotiate many distinct and often conflicting identities, which have been internalized through processes of socialization into different groups, without experiencing the dissociation or gaps in recall that characterize DID.

Rorty's proposed solution to the problem of creating solidarity amidst diversity fails, however, due to the instability of the public/private dichotomy on which it rests. A critical discussion of the liberal ironist's moral psychology nevertheless helps us to appreciate how internalizing difference can function as a form of personal growth. I argue that once we free ironic self-creation from the merely private role Rorty assigns it, we can begin to develop a more complete picture of the moral psychology of the democratic citizen—a citizen who, in virtue of having developed connections to multiple and conflicting group-specific identities, can both critically distance herself from her own situated perspective and forge meaningful connections with oppositionally situated groups. Further, since ironism can be corrosive to our shared democratic commitments, and since Rorty's strategy of insulating the "public" sphere against "private" ironism is undermined by the permeability of the public/private distinction, I suggest that we look toward Anzaldúan ambivalence as a mediator between irony and commitment. The ambivalent democratic citizen tempers the extremes of the Rortyan ironist and the wholehearted Deweyan, while drawing indispensible resources from each for personal and social growth.

The third chapter considers the challenge to Dewey's thick moral conceptions of democracy and of the democratic citizen presented by Cheryl Misak's and Robert Talisse's "Peircean" arguments for a narrowly epistemic form of perfectionism. In Talisse's formulation, epistemic perfectionism is the view that "The formative role of the state is to cultivate epistemic goods, such as reason-responsiveness, fair-mindedness, epistemic charity, epistemic inclusiveness, etc." (2009c, p. 106). With Misak, Talisse argues that only a view of democracy which rests on purely epistemic norms everyone already implicitly accepts is able both to respect pluralism and to commit us all to political democracy. He has argued that Deweyan democracy, by contrast, constitutes a form of moral perfectionism which does not respect pluralism. The

vision of democracy and democratic citizenship I urge, however, takes seriously Dewey's claim that "democracy is a *personal* way of individual life" (*LW* 14, p. 226; emphasis original). Deweyan democracy, therefore, does not entail the top-down perfectionism Talisse suggests it does, which would permit the state to coercively impose a moral value (namely, growth) on its citizens. My reconstruction of Deweyan democracy, moreover, is rooted in an ideal of democratic citizenship that fosters growth not only in its toleration of deep and persistent divisions between groups, but also in its appreciation for the powerful democratic potential of cultivating a plural *self* by internalizing the perspectives of multiple (and sometimes conflicting) groups. Finally, I argue that, in contrast to my version of Deweyan democracy, epistemic perfectionism provides insufficient motivation for the ongoing project of achieving and sustaining a robust and flourishing democratic society.

CHAPTER I

JOHN DEWEY, GROWTH, AND DEMOCRACY AS A WAY OF LIFE

Today our society is deeply divided against itself. As citizens, we are suspicious of each other and of the government, and we seem unable (or unwilling) to work together to address problems that affect us all—or even to agree on what those problems are. Over his long career, which spanned from the late-1880s to the early-1950s, John Dewey expressed with increasing urgency his concern that we in the United States had come to accept a diminished, merely institutional view of democracy. We tend to characterize democracy in terms of formal mechanisms such as universal suffrage, representatives subject to regular elections, and majority rule (Dewey *LW* 2, p. 325). However, Dewey provides us with the conceptual resources to distinguish between mere political democracy (that is, democracy as a form of government) and democracy as a social and personal ideal. Although he acknowledges the importance of democratic political institutions, Dewey argues persuasively for the need to establish a democratic ethos among citizens, animated by a sense that we are bound together by a shared destiny.

The co-existence of sub-groups with different interests and systems of value threatens the stability of the larger democratic community to the extent that political power serves some groups at the expense of others, who experience government authority as alien and oppressive. Without the meaningful, transformative, and positive engagement across difference that Dewey urges, we risk splintering the body politic into opposing factions. This factionalization forestalls social progress and renders it impossible to establish the social trust, mutual respect, and concern necessary to drive a collective effort to ameliorate social problems in mature, wealthy, Western democracies. Many of the problems we face—e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia, and extreme

economic inequality (as well as related issues such as unequal access to quality education and health care)—are a direct reflection of the cultural chasms that separate groups of citizens.

Democracy should embody the character of a people actively involved in shaping and reshaping their institutions according to the felt needs of its diverse citizenry. Dewey helps us see political institutions "as expressions, projections and extensions of habitually dominant personal attitudes" (*LW* 14, p. 226). For Dewey, the familiar democratic ideals of freedom and equality require a culture of mutual trust, respect, and openness between interdependent citizens collectively negotiating a shared physical and social environment. "Whether or no we are, save in some metaphorical sense, all brothers," writes Dewey, "we are at least all in the same boat traversing the same turbulent ocean" (*LW* 9, p. 56). On this view, democracy is a moral ideal that is realized when citizens actively share in the development, or "growth," of groups they identify with, in cooperation with other groups whose interests and self-conceptions are affected by such social transactions.

Recent proponents of "Deweyan democracy," such as Elizabeth Anderson and Hilary Putnam, have stressed Dewey's epistemic arguments for more inclusive and more deliberative political institutions, largely ignoring his moral conception of democracy as a way of life. By contrast, I argue that Dewey's political philosophy, when read with attention to its moral underpinning rather than with a narrow focus on its epistemological dimensions, helps us appreciate the central importance of personal and social growth for a flourishing democracy and, by extension, the need for a thick view of citizenship that demands more from us than informed voting. Growth, which Dewey regards as "the only moral 'end'" (*MW* 12, p. 181) and thus as the standard by which to measure all social and political institutions, depends on the cultivation of active habits and attitudes that allow for positive and transformative engagement across the deep

differences that inevitably exist between citizens in liberal democratic societies[4]—engagement that goes deeper than deliberation aimed at mere truth or rightness.

Despite its promise to foster cross-difference social cooperation as a means to overcome the social fragmentation that erodes our democracy, Dewey's conception of growth rests on the problematic assumption that differences always can and should be overcome and integrated into ever more coherent or harmonious wholes. Growth, as Dewey understands it, ultimately regards diversity not as a permanent positive feature of democratic society but rather as something that is valuable only insofar as it can be transcended and synthesized into a greater whole. In his early essay, "The Ethics of Democracy," Dewey endorses Plato's view that "the end of both politics and ethics" is the "development of the individual [such] that he shall possess as his own the unified will of the community" (*EW* 1, p. 241). It is only Plato's anti-democratic means to that end which Dewey views as objectionable. Later, in *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey concedes that "every individual is a member of many groups," but argues that "fullness of integrated personality is ... possible of achievement, since the pulls and responses of different groups [in a democratic community] reënforce one another and their values accord" (*LW* 2, pp. 328). And in his late monograph on religious moral psychology, *A Common Faith*, Dewey champions faith in the possibilities for personal growth and social progress, which he defines as "the unification of the self through allegiance to inclusive ideal ends" (*LW* 9, p. 23). But in the light of actual processes of identity formation rooted in historical violence between social groups with unequal power, I claim that some individual and community identities cannot be unified without further violence or oppression (which would undermine rather than foster growth, rightly understood). Nevertheless, I argue that differentially situated citizens can develop as distinct

[4] As John Rawls observed in *Political Liberalism*, pluralism "is the long-run outcome of the work of human reason under enduring free institutions" (p. 129).

individuals while forging the relations of mutual trust, respect, and understanding necessary to work together on the ongoing task of building a better democracy.

In this chapter I explicate Dewey's approach to democracy with the aim of highlighting the often overlooked[5] but crucial role personal and social growth play in his political theory. On the one hand, his conception of growth offers invaluable resources for reimagining democratic citizenship in an increasingly complex and diverse society. On the other hand, the quasi-Hegelianism implicit in his articulation of growth as the progressive unification of difference has totalizing implications that are problematic from the perspective of democracy. The ultimate aim of this chapter, then, is to begin reconstructing Dewey's conception of growth in a way that accounts for ineliminable and positively valued diversity, both within the democratic community and within the democratic self/citizen.

The problem with Dewey's conception of growth can be brought into sharper focus through the insights of Chicana lesbian theorists Gloria Anzaldúa and María Lugones, whose identities have been shaped by conflicting cultures (e.g., "Chicana" versus "lesbian" culture) and cannot be wholly integrated. As we shall see, Anzaldúa and Lugones powerfully demonstrate that actively sustaining plural identities within ourselves can play a crucial role in facilitating productive democratic engagement across difference. They show us how to reconcile unity and diversity without subsuming one into the other. A further implication of their insights is that members of privileged social groups can become better democratic citizens by following Anzaldúa and Lugones' lead, opening themselves to transformative interactions with members of other social groups, embracing multiplicitous aspects of their own unfolding identities, and thus contribute to their personal growth, the growth of their sub-groups, and the growth of the larger

[5] For example, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article on "Dewey's Political Philosophy" fails to mention the word "growth" (see Festenstein 2009).

community.

1 Dewey's Threefold Conception of Democracy

To appreciate (and to critically evaluate) the role growth plays in Dewey's political philosophy, it is first necessary to unpack his multidimensional conception of democracy and its significance for personal development and social progress. "Democracy," as Dewey observes, "is a word with many meanings" (*LW* 2, p. 286). He distinguishes three senses of democracy, corresponding to three overlapping spheres of activity: the political, the social, and the personal. In short, "political democracy" refers to a system of government and its institutions, "social democracy" refers to a mode of associated living, and "personal democracy" refers to an individual way of life. These concepts of democracy will be explicated in much greater detail below. For now, however, suffice it to say that, while these three levels of democracy are conceptually separable, Dewey's insight is that they are interrelated and mutually dependent in practice. Too often theorists of democracy focus narrowly on political democracy, as though it were the whole of democracy. I will argue that Dewey's multidimensional conception of democracy, by contrast, helps us to see that no government is fully democratic unless it is animated by a social ethos that, in turn, reflects the democratic habits and attitudes of individuals engaged in an ongoing effort to achieve the ideal of a community concerned with the mutually reinforcing growth of its citizens.

For Dewey, the moral ideal of democracy is realized to the extent that individuals actively and harmoniously share in the growth of the groups to which they belong, with a view toward common interests and values. Democracy cannot be achieved once and for all, but is characterized by a progressive approximation to an ideal. In the light of the irreducibility of difference in a free society, however, any politics that gives pride of place to shared interests and

values raises worries about homogenization and totalization. This is a serious concern and, as we shall see, fully addressing it will require a reconstruction of Dewey's interdependent conceptions of democracy and growth.

1.1 Political Democracy

Political democracy, as Dewey understands it, "means a form of government which does not esteem the well-being of one individual or one class above that of another" (*MW* 10, p. 137). That is, political democracy institutionalizes the ideal of moral equality. As Dewey notes, however, fair and equal treatment under the law "is not realizable save where all interests have an opportunity to be heard, to make themselves felt, to take a hand in shaping politics" (*MW* 10, p. 137)—hence the importance for citizens to enjoy the freedom to participate in political life. Universal suffrage, therefore, is a basic requirement of political democracy. But an electoral system that merely aggregates individual preferences is insufficiently attentive to the social forces that *create* public opinion. In order to allow individuals the opportunity to help shape public opinion before (and after) it is registered in an election, it is equally important for political democracy to institute "effective guarantees of free inquiry, free assembly and free communication" (*LW* 14, p. 227). Communication is vital to a democracy, since policy should be driven by a well-informed *and well-formed* public (though, as I will argue, a well-formed public need not suggest homogeneity, or a harmoniously integrated multiplicity).

Dewey suggests that political democracy as it has emerged from the classical liberal tradition, while establishing formal rights such as freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, nonetheless has failed to secure the social conditions necessary to render such rights substantive. Our legal rights to free speech and assembly "are of little avail if in daily life freedom of communication ... is choked by mutual suspicion, by abuse, by fear and hatred. These things

destroy the essential condition of the democratic way of living even more effectively than open coercion" (*LW* 14, p. 228). At present, as in Dewey's time, economic inequality and prejudice—including classism, racism, sexism, and homophobia—conspire against our democratic ideals.

In keeping with his Darwinian view of social evolution as active adjustment to contingent circumstances (as opposed to the Hegelian/Marxist notion of social evolution as teleologically determined), Dewey insists that democracy is not the inevitable outcome of history. "Political democracy," writes Dewey, has emerged from "a vast multitude of responsive adjustments to a vast number of situations, no two of which were alike" (*LW* 2, p. 287). The upshot is that our social and political institutions should be shaped (and continuously reshaped) by how we conceptualize and, in the light of our conceptions, respond to the social problems we face. And as we shall see, Dewey shows us how the concept of growth can play a crucial role in testing our institutions.

1.2 Social Democracy

For Dewey, individual development and social progress are intimately linked. On his view, both democracy and its opposite, aristocracy, aim toward the ideal of a unified society where each individual can locate her place within the whole. What distinguishes them is that aristocracy limits political participation to an elite few, whereas democracy aims to spread political participation as widely as possible. History shows that the consequence of aristocracy limiting power to "the few wise and good" is that "they cease to remain wise and good" (Dewey *EW* 1, p. 242). Elites come to view the public interest through the distorting lens of their own class biases, thus aristocracy (rule by the best) morphs into self-interested oligarchy (rule by the few). Further, even if elites could lead us "to the highest external development of society and the individual, there would still be a fatal objection," since we know that we "cannot be content with

a good which is procured from without" (Dewey *EW* 1, p. 243). We naturally yearn for agency in our own development, but aristocracy fails to respect the personal autonomy of subaltern classes. Thus the unity of purpose Dewey claims both democracy and aristocracy seek to establish can be achieved only when the common good is worked out from within—that is, when each individual actively participates in shaping the guiding values and norms of her community. Dewey, therefore, insists that political democracy cannot stand on its own; democracy must encompass the whole of community life, and not merely the institutional mechanisms of democratic government. His conception of social democracy supplements political democracy and denotes an ideal of community that allows for socioeconomic mobility and free communication. However, in its emphasis on unity of purpose, his conception of social democracy is insufficiently attentive to differences rooted in structural inequalities.

Although Dewey rarely mentions racial or gender inequality specifically, he is aware of the fact that accidental circumstances of birth and environment tend to advantage some and disadvantage others. He understands that these forces divide society into opposed groups, which results in unfair and unequal distribution of opportunity. Narrow-minded identification with a single social group (such as sex, race, or socioeconomic class) is a tendency that can be overcome only by communicating across difference. Dewey observes that the complexity of social life in industrial civilization (which only has increased in our post-industrial age) has exacerbated the "differences in pursuit and experiences among people" to such an extent that "men will not see across and through the walls which separate them, unless they have been trained to do so" (*MW* 10, p. 139). Thus civic education is crucial for securing social democratic habits that allow for the flourishing of diverse individuals. Dewey is right to insist that without a widely shared commitment to mutual respect, equal opportunity, and freedom, democracy cannot

survive. These commitments are necessary in a pluralistic society precisely because they enable productive interactions between groups and individuals whose interests and values are at odds. At the same time, insofar as Deweyan democracy requires a thicker sense of shared identity, it threatens to marginalize and alienate nonconforming persons and groups.

1.3 Personal Democracy

Social democracy is a moral ideal, since it requires a culture of openness to others and a sense of community that is, in some sense, inclusive of difference. Such a community, though, depends on the cultivation of democratic habits and attitudes in individual human beings. Dewey, therefore, champions productive engagement across difference not only to build community, but also (and at the same time) to foster democratic virtues. "To cooperate by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other person but is a means of enriching one's own life-experience," Dewey insists, "is inherent in the democratic personal way of life" (*LW* 14, p. 228). It is important to note that, for Dewey, differences are not merely to be tolerated; rather, they are to be actively engaged with since, as I explain below (see section 3), it is through encounters with difference that opportunities arise for personal growth.

Although Dewey viewed the social and the personal as interrelated, he stressed that "individuals are the finally decisive factors of the nature and movement of associated life" (*LW* 14, p. 91). The rise of totalitarianism in the early twentieth century gave urgency to his view that "only the voluntary initiative and voluntary cooperation of individuals can produce social institutions that will protect the liberties necessary for achieving development of genuine individuality" (*LW* 14, p. 92). Democratic institutions provide the formal and legal structure necessary for social democracy, but institutions alone are not sufficient without investment from

"individuals who prize their own liberties and who prize the liberties of others, individuals who are democratic in thought and action" (*LW* 14, pp. 92). Thus democracy, as a mode of associated living, requires both institutional support and the cultivation of personal democratic habits and attitudes.

Faith in democracy, then, ultimately is one with faith in individuals. For Dewey, democracy entails "faith in the capacity of the intelligence of the common man to respond with commonsense to the free play of facts and ideas which are secured by effective guarantees of free inquiry, free assembly and free communication" (*LW* 14, p. 227). Thus he opposes critics of participatory democracy who—like Richard Posner and Dewey's contemporary Walter Lippmann—view the average citizen's intelligence as inadequate to cope effectively with the increasingly complex challenges of modern social life.[6] Further, Dewey argues that mutual trust, respect, and the free exchange of ideas across difference are essential to democracy. "Intolerance, abuse, calling of names because of differences of opinion about religion or politics or business, as well as because of differences of race, color, wealth or degree of culture," according to Dewey, "are treason to the democratic way of life" (*LW* 14, p. 227). The formal mechanisms of a democratic government, including protections on freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, are necessary but not sufficient for the establishment of a democratic community—which, in addition, requires an association of citizens who have firmly established a democratic ethos. Most of all, democracy requires the recognition of the moral value of

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[6] For example, Walter Lippmann writes, "The individual man does not have opinions on all public affairs. He does not know what is happening, why it is happening, what ought to happen. I cannot imagine how he could know, and there is not the least reason for thinking, as mystical democrats have thought, that the compounding of individual ignorances in masses of people can produce a continuous directing force in public affairs" (1925, p. 39).

Similarly, Richard Posner writes, "With the growth of government and the acceleration in the rate of social change, the number and complexity of political issues have grown faster than the public's ability to understand them, while interest in the issues has declined" (2003, p. 151).

individual growth, of each person's equal right to develop her individual capacities in association with others.

Because the conditions for individual growth are contextual, a commitment to promoting the growth of "every member of society" requires us to be attentive to others' experiences, interests, and concerns. Openness to and respect for difference thus is crucial to democracy as a personal way of life. These traits, when widely shared, allow for the creation of an inclusive social democratic community, which, in turn, allows for the formation and articulation of the common values that underpin and inform the institutions of a political democracy. However, rather than follow Dewey in conceiving of democracy as oriented toward the ideal of a thoroughgoing unity from diversity, I recommend that we re-conceptualize his democratic ideal in terms of establishing Wittgensteinian relations of family resemblance among diverse groups within a democratic community. That is, we should give up hope of reaching consensus on a substantive set of values that will ground our laws and social norms and instead try to forge "a complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing" among groups (Wittgenstein 1953, p. 66). Such a network would be fluid and dynamic, but it also would allow for the formation of temporary majorities sufficient to give form to the democratic community—a form that future publics can recast in their own image. By weaving common threads through the patchwork of our differences we may hope to hold together groups whose identities have been constructed in opposition to one another and who have a history of mutual resentment and suspicion. Again, in order to maintain the fluidity and dynamism necessary to realize such a conception of democracy, Dewey is right to insist that certain habits and attitudes, such as openness and respect for difference, must be widely shared—hence the necessity of civic education for democracy.

Dewey's focus on the personal and social dimensions of democracy has generated the criticism that his political theory lacks specificity, in terms of offering concrete institutional recommendations. For example, Richard Bernstein complains that "[t]here is too little emphasis on institutional analysis—on what sort of institutions are required for a flourishing democracy" (2010, p. 87). This line of critique begs the question against Dewey's view of democracy, which stresses the personal and social rather than the political. Moreover, Bernstein's objection misses the pragmatic point that we need to begin from where we are and address problematic situations as they arise. Dewey's aim is not to prescribe for us the institutional requirements of a flourishing democracy in abstraction from concrete, socially and historically contingent realities. On the one hand, insofar as our existing laws and institutions have proven useful in the past—that is, insofar as they have evolved and survived by meeting needs that have arisen over the course of our history—they thereby enjoy prima facie legitimacy. On the other hand, for Dewey, no law or institution should be regarded as beyond criticism. Even the most successful and seemingly essential mechanisms of democratic government could prove obsolete under changed conditions. "There is no sanctity," writes Dewey, "in universal suffrage, frequent elections, majority rule, congressional and cabinet government" (*LW* 2, pp. 334). As a public intellectual, Dewey's own political rhetoric was, at times, revolutionary and often outran the piecemeal, melioristic character of his own recommended approach to politics[7]; however, what he offers us, instead of a blueprint for an ideal sociopolitical order or a list of a priori institutional requirements, is a conception of democracy that gives us a lever for criticizing, improving, or replacing existing institutions in the light of our present needs.

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[7] For instance, Edward Bordeau suggests that Dewey attacked President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal from the Left as insufficiently radical even though it was influenced by Dewey's pragmatism (Bordeau, 1971).

1.4 The Epistemology of Deweyan Democracy

Despite the evident moral resonance of Dewey's conception of democracy as fundamentally a personal and social ideal, many pragmatist philosophers interpret Dewey as having offered a narrowly epistemological conception of democracy. For example, Posner terms Dewey's conception of democracy "epistemic democracy" (see Posner, 2003); Hilary Putnam claims that Dewey understood democracy as "the precondition for the full application of intelligence to the solution of social problems" (1990b, p. 331); and, according to Elizabeth Anderson, Dewey "characterized democracy as the use of social intelligence to solve problems of practical interest" (2006, p. 13). On this view, democracy as use of social intelligence involves the cooperative application of Dewey's method of inquiry, by both citizens and public officials, in deliberating about how best to resolve problematic situations. Although this epistemic characterization of Deweyan democracy captures one important part of his theory, it does not capture the whole of it, or even the most important part. To better understand the character of the link between Dewey's epistemology and his conception of democracy, as well as the limitations of a narrowly epistemic reading of Deweyan democracy, let us briefly review his model of inquiry and its application to political deliberation.

In *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, Dewey defines inquiry as "transformation of an indeterminate situation into a determinately unified one" (*LW* 12, pp. 121).[8] An indeterminate situation is one that is "disturbed, troubled, ambiguous, confused, full of conflicting tendencies, obscure, etc." (*LW* 12, p. 109). A problematic or indeterminate situation, then, is one in which the individual's habitual modes of action become ineffective in producing desired results. For

[8] Note the continuity between Dewey's conception of the aim of inquiry and his notion of the aim of growth. For Dewey, inquiry and growth are interrelated processes of unification. Thus epistemology and ethics, facts and values, are inexorably entangled.

this reason, Larry Hickman has suggested that Dewey's theory of inquiry is "technological" in the sense that "it is the means of effective control of an environment that is not what we wish it to be" (1990, p. 41).

For Dewey, science, in the broadest sense of the word, sets the standard for all forms of inquiry—including moral and political inquiry.[9] Following Dewey, Philip Kitcher has recently argued that science is uniquely suited to provide the shared mode of inquiry democracy requires for resolving questions of public concern (see Kitcher 2008). Phrased in the language of politics rather than science, the first step in the application of social intelligence is the identification of a problematic situation confronting the public. Second, the contours and scope of the problematic situation are debated, as it relates to the public interest. Third, possible solutions to public problems are proposed and debated with reference to their imagined consequences. Finally, a solution is settled on, usually by popular vote, which we then test by putting it into practice and evaluating its actual consequences. Anderson explains that, for Dewey, unfavorable results "should be treated in a scientific spirit as disconfirmations of our policies. They give us reason to revise our policies to make them do a better job solving our problems" (2006, p. 13).

Anderson rightly credits Dewey's conception of democracy for its diversity, dynamism, and emphasis on discussion. I agree that Dewey captures the epistemic value of diversity in bringing different perspectives to bear on problematic situations.[10] Including all perspectives in public deliberation helps certify that decisions "are truly in the public interest—responsive in a fair way to everyone's concerns" (Anderson 2006, p. 14). Further, inclusive deliberation is able

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[9] John Shook notes "something highly interesting about Dewey's theory of problem solving and his theory of 'publics'"—namely, that "the stages of each process match step for step" (2013, p. 12).

[10] In *The Difference*, Scott Page gives a mathematical proof which shows that cognitive diversity fosters understanding and innovation, and cites psychological research which shows that cultural diversity begets cognitive diversity (see Page, 2007).

to take into account the local, situated knowledge of individuals in a way that deliberation within centralized, insular groups cannot (Anderson 2006, p. 14). Dewey's approach to democracy also accounts for the importance of having political institutions that allow for dynamism (that is, the capacity for adaptive change), such as "periodic elections, a free press skeptical of state power, petitions to government, public opinion polling, protests, public comment on proposed regulations of administrative agencies" (Anderson 2006, p. 14). These institutions function as feedback mechanisms that embody Dewey's experimentalist attitude and highlight the role of dissent both before and after a decision is made. As Anderson notes, dynamism and discussion thus work hand-in-hand, since the point of dynamic institutions is to hold government officials accountable to citizen feedback articulated through public discussion. Importantly, for Anderson, the epistemic merits of democracy can be attained only within a community that is open to diversity and dissent.

Although Anderson correctly interprets Deweyan democracy as "governed by norms of equality, discussion, and tolerance of diversity" (2006, p. 15), it is important to see that, on her view, these norms ultimately are grounded in democracy's epistemic requirements, which she views as more fundamental. By contrast, I contend that Anderson and others who stress the epistemic merits of Deweyan political democracy give short shrift to the moral core of Dewey's political thought, which is located in his view of democracy as fundamentally a personal and social way of life directed toward growth.

1.5 Deweyan Democracy as a Moral Ideal

By calling attention to both the epistemic *and moral* dimensions of democratic citizenship, Dewey helps us see that institutional solutions alone cannot solve democracy's ills. His moral conception of democracy hinges on the claim that growth requires widespread

democratic habits and attitudes within the context of a pluralistic community. Commitment to the promotion of growth not only requires formal democracy, but also (and especially) the cultivation of democracy as a personal and social way of life—a way of life which calls us to overcome the historical antagonisms that divide us, build relations of trust in each other and in our institutions, and forge the emotional bonds necessary to motivate us to identify and address complex social problems.

On the reading I am urging, Dewey derives democracy's epistemic requirements from a prior commitment to the moral importance of personal and social growth. This is clear if we consider that, for Dewey, getting a political decision right is not a matter of correspondence to some non-human pattern (such as the Platonic Form of Justice); rather, a correct political decision is one that fosters growth. Importantly, as R.W. Hildreth observes, Dewey's notion of growth provides a *partial* answer to critics, like C. Wright Mills, who complain that Dewey's political theory "ignores power issues" (Mills, 1964, p. 394). "Growth provides an anti-foundational, yet normative, criterion for examining the ways in which power opens up—or, at times, forecloses—future possibilities for everyday actors" (Hildreth, p. 796). That is, growth provides a moral criterion for the evaluation of social institutions—a criterion that is itself non-epistemic but nonetheless can guide inquiry. Fundamentally, Dewey views democratic inquirers not as quasi-scientific seekers of truth, but as ethico-political agents seeking to ameliorate problematic situations that arise in morally fraught human social interactions. Democracy's promise can be fulfilled only by a broad cultural transformation in which individual citizens view themselves as responsible to and for, rather than locked in competition with, each other.

Finally, interpreting Dewey's defense of democracy exclusively through an epistemological lens not only ignores the emphasis he places on the moral significance of

growth, but also elides the role he ascribes to faith in sustaining a commitment to democracy as a way of life. He saw faith in a better human future as crucial to the moral psychology of democratic citizens. For Dewey, commitment to the ideal of democracy in a non-ideal world requires a non- or supra-rational leap. This is especially true for individuals who identify with groups whose interests are not the interests of the voting majority. In order for those in the minority to be willing to abide by and identify with majority decisions, there must be some mechanism available for maintaining hope that continued participation in the social and political life of the larger community might pay off, in the absence of guarantees of success. Thus an adequate pragmatic account of democracy—one that actually can move us to sacrifice for an uncertain future—cannot be articulated fully within a narrowly epistemological framework.

2 The Individual and/in the Community

To more fully appreciate how growth functions as a moral ideal in Dewey's political thought, and to deepen our understanding of democracy as at once a social and personal way of life, it is necessary to understand his relational conception of the self, in which the self is forged and maintained in and through its various social roles. Dewey's social self dissolves the antagonistic individual/community dualism we have inherited from the classical liberal conception of individualism. From his perspective, the philosophical mistake classical liberals make is to suppose that elements which can be abstracted from experience and analyzed separately in thought, such as "individual" and "community," must be ontologically distinct, self-sufficient entities (see Festenstein, 2009). By contrast, Dewey argues that persons develop, physically and morally, through organic transactions with their natural and social environments. He gives us a view of individuality as an ongoing and never completed achievement that requires the sort of varied social interactions he identifies with democratic community life. In this way,

Dewey offers a needed corrective to the American myth of the rugged, self-reliant individual, which continues to exert a profound influence in popular discourse.

2.1 Classical Liberal Individualism

Dewey articulates his own conception of the individual and her relationship to society by contrasting it with (his interpretation of) John Locke's individualism. "The whole temper of [Locke's] philosophy," according to Dewey, "is individualistic in the sense in which individualism is opposed to organized social action" (*LW* 11, p. 7). For Locke, the proper function of political power is for the protection of God-given natural rights to life, liberty, and (especially) private property, which belong to all individuals in the state of nature, regardless of social relations or status. According to Dewey, classical liberals prioritize private interests over social relationships and place undue emphasis on negative liberty—that is, *freedom from* interference.

The historical motivation for the classical liberal view that non-interference is sufficient for individual freedom is rooted in a concern with the oppressive effects of authoritarian state power. Locke articulated his liberal theory in opposition to the politico-economic order of seventeenth century England, which concentrated social and political power in the hands of monarchs (along with a landed aristocracy) and held the peasantry in bondage to their kings and feudal lords. By prioritizing the individual over the community, Locke undermined social conventions that justified entrenched hierarchical power structures. His pre-political rights secured *formal* equality among individuals and foreclosed claims of natural superiority by one social class over another.

In its emphasis on pre-social property rights, Locke's political theory, when set in the context of transformations taking place in modes of production during the Industrial Revolution

of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, laid the groundwork for a defense of laissez-faire capitalism. As Dewey explains,

> The conception of labor as the source of right in property was employed not so much to protect property from confiscation by the ruler [as was Locke's primary concern] ... as to urge and justify freedom in the use and investment of capital and the right of laborers to move about and seek new modes of employment—claims denied by the common law that came down from semi-feudal conditions. (*LW* 11, p. 8).

Locke's individualism, which Dewey credits as useful for its historical moment insofar as it undermined the political justification for feudalism, thus was developed into the economic theory of laissez-faire liberalism, associated originally with Adam Smith.[11] Individual property rights provided a critical lever against outmoded feudal laws and regulations that were holding back the new economy.

The economic development that accompanied industrial capitalism came at a price, however. Dewey attributed the malaise he perceived in the U.S. during the 1920s, in the lead-up to the Great Depression, to a laissez-faireism that had outlived its historical usefulness and which had unraveled the social relationships that foster genuine individuality. "An economic individualism of motives and aims," writes Dewey, "underlies our present corporate mechanisms, and undoes the individual" (*LW* 5, p. 70). Inhuman corporations treat persons as replaceable cogs in a machine rather than as unique individuals with capacities worth developing for non-economic ends. The result is a problematic disconnection between actions undertaken for

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[11] In his *Wealth of Nations* (1776), Smith argues that when individuals are left free to pursue their own private interests in a free market, the results of their disparate efforts are guided by an "invisible hand" toward the promotion of social welfare. Unfortunately, in its popular reception, Smith's economic theory—especially the metaphor of the invisible hand, which he mentions only once—has been (mis)interpreted as a justification for egoism while his theory of moral sentiments—which acknowledged the deep sociality of human nature—has been largely overlooked.

private economic gain and their social consequences, undermining both individual development and social progress.

Dewey's diagnosis of the social ills associated with economic individualism applies to our present unfortunate situation, too. Our public debates tend to be waged within a narrowly economic framework that cannot take into account non-economic values. As British historian Tony Judt noted recently, when we in the English-speaking world ask ourselves "whether we support a proposal or initiative, we have not asked, is it good or bad? Instead we inquire: Is it efficient? Is it productive? Would it benefit gross domestic product?" (2009). But Judt also reminds us that our current privileging of economic considerations over moral considerations "is not an instinctive human condition" but rather "an acquired taste" (2009). The economic framework within which we debate public issues is optional. One aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how attention to Deweyan growth can reorient us toward a consideration of non-economic values for democracy.

Classical liberal individualism, as Dewey represents it, is ill equipped to deal with, or even recognize, systemic causes of suffering associated with social and economic inequalities, and thus is unable to conceive of interventions that could effectively address its root causes. Indeed, many political conservatives who see themselves as defenders of the classical liberal tradition reflexively reject attempts to address inequality systemically, such as "preferences, quotas, and set-asides" (McDonnell et al, p. 9), and instead assert a meritocratic view of fairness that fails to account for the unequal distribution of opportunities to develop capacities recognized as meritorious. An individual's wealth (success) or poverty (failure) are seen by proponents of laissez-faireism as a function of individual merit and effort, without acknowledgment of the broader social forces (including unequal power relations rooted in a history of violence and

oppression) that make individual success likely for some and poverty nearly inescapable for others. By contrast, Dewey calls us to recognize that the laissez-faire view of "separate and competing economic action of individuals as the means to social well-being as the end" should be turned on its head, so that we come to see that the "economy is the means of free individual development as the end" (*LW* 11, p. 63). The market economy is just another set of institutions that should be subject to adjustment (or "regulation") in the light of their social effects. Dewey helps us see that growth of individual capacities provides a better test of economic institutions than growth of GDP.

2.2 Individualism Reconstructed

In contrast to classical liberalism, Dewey offers a social view of the self that rejects the opposition between the individual and society. In so doing, he points the way toward an ideal of democratic citizenship that overcomes antagonisms between differentially situated persons within a community and fosters personal and social growth. For Dewey, individuality is an effect of social relations, personal intelligence, and idiosyncratic impulses. The private self is always already situated within a complex matrix of social forces that constitutively affect her identity. At the same time, we exercise agency in shaping our own identity by negotiating and responding to the diversity of experiences (the meanings of which are socially mediated) that impinge on us. Thus individuality is both socially given and a personal achievement.

Because each person takes up her own distinctive position within the social web, each individual is unique. "For individuality," writes Dewey, "signals unique connections to the whole" (*MW* 14, p. 226). This uniqueness undergirds Dewey's conception of equality between individuals, which he sets against the classical liberal notion of equality as sameness (evidenced in the unanimity and replaceability of workers and consumers in a market dominated society).

Equality, for Dewey, "does not signify that kind of mathematical or physical equivalence in virtue of which any one element may be substituted for another"; rather, equality "denotes effective regard for whatever is distinctive and unique in each, irrespective of physical and psychological inequalities" (*LW* 2, p. 329). The uniqueness inherent in individuality gives each person a special role to play in the life of a community—a role that, for many, can be fulfilled only if the larger community is willing to invest in the development of their capacities.

To the extent that each person's experiences can be brought to bear on socially significant problems, each individual can make a positive contribution to the shaping of her community's future. Each person, then, is worthy of equal regard with respect to her individual potentiality. "Individualism means inequity, harshness, and retrogression to barbarism," Dewey warns, "unless it is a generalized individualism: an individualism which takes into account the real good and effective—not merely formal—freedom of every social member" (*MW* 5, p. 422). The incommensurability of individuals, then, gives moral substance to the concept of equality, which implies a duty to be attentive to difference and to foster each person's ability to develop the full range of her capacities. He argues that democracy "denotes a faith in individuality, in uniquely distinctive qualities in each human being; ... with willing acceptance of the modification of the established order entailed by the release of individual capacities" (*MW* 13, p. 297).

For Dewey, the ability to intelligently synthesize and reconstruct diverse experiences in the light of ever-changing circumstances is critical for individual freedom. The development of individual capacities (which, for Dewey, are the engine of social progress) requires a shift in emphasis from negative liberty to positive liberty—that is, *freedom to* create and pursue our ends. By itself, negative liberty, or *freedom from* interference, is worthless unless it is accompanied by the positive "power to be an individualized self" (Dewey *LW* 2, p. 329). In this

way, Dewey offers a reconstruction (rather than a simple rejection) of classical liberalism's notion of individualism. He does not deny that some negative liberty is necessary to prevent oppressive uses of force, but he stresses that it is insufficient for the sort of freedom that matters. Negative liberty must be supplemented with positive liberty, which, when effectively guaranteed by an appropriate system of rights, secures for each individual the material and social support needed to develop her capacities and enjoy a meaningfully free life in productive association with others.

2.3 Dewey's Conception of Community

Although the abstract concepts "individual" and "community" may be analyzed apart from one another, in concrete experience every individual is existentially bound to one or more communities. This is why Dewey regards personal growth and social progress as interdependent processes. The development of individuality requires a social context, a community. And community life, of course, is ultimately composed of individuals acting in relation to one another. However, the mere co-existence of humans living side-by-side is insufficient for community or individuality. Just as individuality is an achievement that requires social support, community is an achievement that requires intelligent and conscientious relationship-building among diverse individuals and social groups. "Individuals still do the thinking, desiring, and purposing," Dewey allows, "but what they think of is a consequence of their behavior upon that of others and that of others upon themselves" (*LW* 2, p. 250).

Our individuality is socially constituted and thus places us in moral relation to one another. Morality is inextricably social, as moral questions arise only once our actions affect

other people.[12] For Dewey, morality arises from the collective habits, or customs, of a social group. Through social transactions we internalize the moral judgments of others and learn to hold ourselves accountable to them. Given sufficient contact with different social groups, individuals are exposed to a variety of customs, and therefore a variety of overlapping but not fully commensurate moral standards. Thus individuals syncretically adopt aspects of different cultural norms by which to pattern their behavior.

If moral standards are derived from local custom rather than from some trans-cultural or transcendent source, we may be tempted to think they have no claim to authority. Dewey rightly regards this objection as fallacious. Although there are no transcendent standards from which custom derives its authority, neither is it the case that moral standards are merely accidental to the development of social customs. The authority of moral standards (or custom) is derived from lived experience. The collective habits of our cultural inheritance are an integral part of the substance of our lives. The question, therefore, is not whether we should live according to custom, but rather which groups to identify with, and thus which customs to endorse. The intelligent selection and synthesis of group-affiliated identities is, for Dewey, necessary for our individual freedom and growth, and places us in moral relation to a wider community.

Dewey stresses that community is established and maintained through communication. "Men live in a community in virtue of the things they have in common; and communication is the way they come to possess things in common" (*MW* 9, p. 7). Effective communication begets shared cognitive and affective dispositions. Whereas physical interaction alone is sufficient for mere associated activity, community life must be "emotionally, intellectually, consciously

[12] Dewey's view of morality as inextricably social would seem to imply that we have no self-regarding moral duties; however, in his relational conception of the self, he rejects the sharp distinction between self-directed actions and actions that affect others.

sustained" (*LW* 2, p. 330). We are born into associative relationships, but we become members of a community by assimilating cultural knowledge, by appropriating a community's language, customs, values, as well as its prejudices. Because meaning arises through communication, human life gains significance through our ability to communicate with each other, affect each other's attitudes, and thereby participate in the shaping of our shared social organization.

Community, according to Dewey, requires meanings that are self-consciously held in common and pursued together. "Wherever there is conjoint activity whose consequences are appreciated as good by all singular persons who take part in it, and where the realization of the good is such as to effect an energetic desire and effort to sustain it in being just because it is a good shared by all, there is so far a community" (Dewey *LW* 2, p. 328). It is through communication, Dewey argues, that we are able to transcend mere associated activity and form communities, where we come to understand each other and are able to coordinate our joint actions intelligently and sympathetically.

Dewey's emphasis on commonality, however, glosses over deeply felt differences and entrenched conflicts of interest within communities. Yet he is clear that difference is necessary for individual growth. It is by participating in diverse modes of life, which Dewey assumes will flourish within a democratic community, that we acquire the cultural resources needed to grow as individuals. The apparent tension between commonality and difference in Dewey's conception of community can be *partially* resolved once we appreciate the distinction he draws between a mere group and a community. A group may be a narrow association among people who share a common identity. Most of us identify with many such groups; we can be sorted into groups based on (inter alia) class, race, sexual orientation, gender, political party, religious affiliation, or shared hobbies. The fact that each of us is a member of many groups—indeed, our identity is

largely constituted by the groups with which we identify—suggests the importance of maintaining enough flexibility within each group to allow for identification with other groups. "Since every individual is a member of many groups," Dewey tells us, "liberation of the potentialities of members of a group in harmony with the interests and goods which are in common" can be achieved only "when different groups interact flexibly and fully in connection with other groups" (*LW* 2, p. 328).

"Community," then, can be profitably read as Dewey's honorific term for a group that balances internal diversity and openness to other groups against the need for a sense of commonality sufficient to orient us toward some shared conception of the good. For Dewey, while a community is characterized by a shared a set of values and way of life, the moral ideal represented by "community" also requires enough flexibility and openness to interact productively with other social groups—otherwise, its own development will be arrested and the group will be unable to adapt to changing conditions.

Dewey proposes two criteria for the measurement of community as a moral ideal: 1) "How numerous and varied are the interests which are commonly shared?" and 2) "How full and free is the interplay with other forms of association?" (*MW* 9, p. 89). The first criterion measures a group in terms of the internal relations among its members, while the second criterion measures a group in terms of its relations with other groups. Although it is doubtful a group could meet the second criterion but not the first (as transactions with diverse other groups would affect a group's internal character), a group could meet the first criterion but fail to meet the second. For example, a criminal gang shares a common group identity and may share a variety of interests in common; however, as Dewey points out, a "robber band cannot interact flexibly with other groups" (*LW* 2, p. 328). Thus a robber band is a mere group and not a community, since it

violates the second criterion in its insularity and its antagonistic stance toward outside groups.

Similarly, authoritarian societies cannot function as proper communities. A community should be varied rather than monolithic, open rather than closed to outside persons or groups, and dynamic rather than static. Non-democratic societies cannot measure up to this ideal, since, though their members may have interests in common (Dewey cites "fear" as a glue holding authoritarian societies together), there is little room for internal diversity or openness to outside groups. The result is social stagnation and lack of opportunity for individual development—which, for Dewey, are two sides of the same coin. Significantly, societies that have democratic political institutions but whose citizens lack democratic habits and attitudes are not fully communities.[13] A society organized around the merely aggregated collective actions of individual citizens is incompatible with the spirit of cooperative interaction that characterizes a proper community—"no amount of aggregated collective action of itself constitutes community" (Dewey *LW* 2, p. 330). It is important to stress, therefore, that Dewey does not subsume community within the institutional framework of an ostensibly democratic government. He insists, rather, that democratic institutions should reflect the varied, open, and flexible character of the community they serve.

Arguably, in the post-9/11 United States our community has deteriorated by turning inward and rejecting difference. Further, economic uncertainty coupled with demographic trends that register growing minority populations within the U.S. have triggered a racist backlash among a vocal minority of white social conservatives who seek a return to a mythic national origin. In our present state of insecurity we have once more, as Dewey remarked of us in 1932,

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[13] Attention to this fact helps explain why it has proved so difficult to create new democracies in countries whose traditions are antithetical to democratic habits and attitudes. We can, by force, install the formal mechanisms of a democratic government. But new democratic habits and attitudes can take hold of a people only through social processes that arise organically within a culture.

"put a false value upon mere uniformity, and created to some extent jealousy of distinction, fear of the dissenter and non-conformist in social matters, a fear increased as population has become heterogeneous through immigration" (Dewey *LW* 7, p. 355). In our time, this fear has manifest in a recent spate of anti-immigration policies and attacks on ethnic literature programs in public schools (for example, the 2010 ban on ethnic studies in the Tucson Unified School District of Tucson, Arizona). By contrast, Dewey's theory of the individual-in-community[14] helps us to see the value of immigration and cultural diversity for a thriving democratic society.

The objection nevertheless may be pressed against Dewey that a society as large and diverse as exists in the United States could not be regarded as a community, in his honorific sense of the term. Indeed, I agree that Dewey's utopian ideal of community is not realizable, especially given the history of oppression and violence that has contributed to the formation of conflicting group identities. As Cornel West has observed, Dewey's optimism betrays a lack of a "deep sense of evil and the tragic" (1993, p. 179). But it is also important to recognize Dewey's focus on local interactions and the ever-unfolding process of expanding our self-conceptions through engagement with others. Communicative transactions enlarge our experiences, our selves, and thus our capacity for sympathetic understanding across difference. Taken in this light, we can think of community as a worthy regulative ideal; the closer we come to approximating it in our experience, *consistent with a proper respect for diversity and with full awareness of the evil and tragic aspects of human experience*, the better off our democracy will be. Still, the objection points to an unresolved tension in Dewey's thought between his promotion of unification processes that threaten to elide conflicts and his recognition of diversity as a positive feature of democratic societies (an issue I take up again in section 3).

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[14] cf. Honi Haber's term "subject-in-community" (Haber 1994).

2.4 Individual Rights and Social Responsibilities

For Dewey, rights help ensure the effective use of our positive freedoms, and provide a critical lever for evaluating institutions in terms of whether they promote or inhibit personal and social growth. Rights are essential for securing our basic needs and freedoms, and for preventing electoral majorities from passing laws that would undermine the social conditions democracy presupposes, such as political equality, economic security, and free expression and debate. At the same time, Dewey's social conception of the self represents a challenge to classical liberalism's conception of individual rights. For Locke, rights are God-given endowments that belong to our essential human nature and create an impenetrable sphere of personal sovereignty. However, the increasing secularization of the West and the Darwinian insight into the malleability and adaptability of human nature have made it impossible to sustain consensus on religious, foundationalist, or absolutist approaches to human rights. Dewey rejects the Lockean notion of natural rights, but accepts that socially constructed rights are nonetheless real. Although rights are "individual in residence," they are "social in origin and intent" (Dewey *MW* 5, p. 394). Given their social origin, human rights are contextual and revisable in the light of our changing needs.

Dewey criticizes the Lockean notion of rights for failing to appreciate fully the correlation between individual rights and social obligations. Not only does *my* right imply *your* obligation (not to infringe on my right), but *my* right also implies *my* obligation to support social structures that make the rights I enjoy available to everyone (see Betz 1978, p. 39). For example, exercise of the positive freedom to make use of private property is secure only under social conditions that make private property possible. Dewey argues that, far from being the fruit of individual initiative, the acquisition and control of private property discloses a person's debt to society for "the avenues it has opened to him for acquiring; the safeguards it has put about him

for keeping; the wealth achieved by others which he may acquire by exchanges themselves socially buttressed" (*MW* 5, p. 395). For even the most industrious individual, these benefits are "unearned increments" (Dewey *MW* 5, p. 395). Classical liberal individualism does not acknowledge the full social debt owed by those who have acquired the most, but instead invokes property rights as a trump against redistribution programs that would provide a social minimum for those the market economy leaves behind.

Far from denying the importance of property rights, Dewey recognizes that control of property is necessary for the maintenance of life and for the full use of our physical powers. Effective property rights ensure that each individual can acquire the material means for her own security, self-development, and thus for the chance to contribute to the life of her community. Property rights are crucial for the exercise of our most basic physical rights, which include the (negative) right to "the free and unharmed possession of the body" and the (positive) right to "free movement of the body" (*MW* 5, p. 396). Dewey argues that the "physical rights to life, limb, and property, are ... so fundamental to the existence of personality that their insecurity or infringement is a direct menace to the social welfare" (*MW* 5, p. 396). Further, because Dewey insists on the continuity and mutual dependence of mental and physical life, he argues that mere physical rights to life and free movement "would have no meaning were it not that they subserve purposes and affections" (*MW* 5, p. 398). Thus he hails the recognition of "mental rights," including freedom of speech, assembly, and religious expression, as important social achievements that give moral substance to the "physical rights" to life and freedom of movement. These interrelated physical and mental rights, which guarantee effective use of our positive freedoms and thereby promote growth, provide an important critical lever for evaluating social practices.

Whereas Locke's theory of rights emphasizes the need for a sphere of non-interference for self-development, Dewey's theory shifts the emphasis to the consequences of social institutions for the actual development of human capacities. For example, he recognized in the early twentieth century that our practices of imprisonment and capital punishment, while ostensibly for the protection of the public, are disproportionate to social need and, in practice, violate rather than uphold individual rights to bodily integrity and freedom of movement (*MW* 5, p. 397). The problem has grown worse in recent years, as public officials in the United States compete over who is tougher on "criminals" (where "criminals" has become a racialized category). For Dewey, "the sole sure protection of society is through education and correction of individual character, not by mere physical isolation under harsh conditions" (*MW* 5, p. 397). Instead, vast public resources are spent on arresting, prosecuting, imprisoning, and executing minorities—particularly African-Americans and Latino/as—rather than on providing education and social support for the development of disadvantaged individuals and groups.

Poverty, which, again, disproportionally affects African-Americans and Latino/as, signals another failure to uphold our basic rights. Dewey notes that while charities are effective in preventing starvation and death from treatable diseases, and thus affirm a right to life, the fact that they are needed signals the more fundamental failure of society to provide the resources necessary for the disadvantaged to exercise their rights in a meaningful and rewarding way. Although "handouts" to the poor from private charities or religious organizations may be efficient from an economic perspective, being the subject of charity is personally humiliating in a way that receiving social benefits as a basic human right is not (see Judt 2009). "[A]lthough historic conditions have put the control of the machinery of production in the hands of a comparatively few persons," Dewey laments that "society takes little heed to see that great

masses of men get even that little property which is requisite to secure assured, permanent, and properly stimulating conditions of life" (*MW* 5, p. 398). The charity framework places recipients in a deficit position, whereas recognition that disadvantaged citizens have a right to enlist help from the community serves the important democratic aim of equalizing political power between rich and poor.

Dewey's emphasis on the efficacy of social norms and laws in positively supporting the growth of "every individual" stands in sharp contrast with classical liberal laissez-faireism. He acknowledges that maximizing growth is "a high moral ideal" but points out that laissez-faireism "is condemned by the fact that it has in mind only an abstract, mechanical, external, and hence formal freedom" (*MW* 5, p. 432). Without positive social and institutional support, we cannot develop as individuals. Further, the focus on efficiency and profitability as the measure of the worth of an institution or program obscures from view the human cost involved in cuts to public services such as transportation, education, and food programs. Dewey provides a moral framework built around a concept of human growth that can substitute for the narrowly economic framework within which we have grown used to deliberate our collective decisions.

Because Dewey's moral ideal makes essential reference to individuality, it also stands in contrast to the communitarian standard, according to which the good of each is subordinate to the good of the whole. Communitarianism's tendency toward a monolithic view of group identity forecloses opportunities for continuous growth, since growth requires internal diversity and openness to other groups. Dewey argues that "individual variation may involve opposition, not conformity or subordination, to the existing social good taken statically; and yet may be the sole means by which the existing State is to progress. Minorities are not always right; but every advance in right begins in a minority of one" (*MW* 5, p. 433). Social progress thus requires

diversity, open communication, and the potential of each individual to help shape the norms and laws governing her community—that is, social progress requires democracy.

Democracy rests on the principle that physical and intellectual rights require universal political rights. "Suffrage," writes Dewey, "stands for direct and active participation in the regulation of the terms upon which associated life shall be sustained, and the pursuit of the good carried on. Political freedom and responsibility *express an individual's power and obligation to make effective all his other capacities by fixing the social conditions of their exercise*" (*MW* 5, p. 424; emphasis original). This point highlights the interrelatedness of personal, social, and political democracy with respect to the construction, articulation, and enforcement of rights. Abstracted from its moral dimension in fixing the conditions for "the development of all the social capacities of every individual member of society," political democracy is a mere "piece of machinery, to be maintained or thrown away ... on the basis of its economy and efficiency of working" (*MW* 5, p. 424). In contrast to the rights of classical liberalism, which amount to merely formal freedom, Dewey offers a vision of effective rights for all, backed by a democratic government that is continuous with a democratic culture embodying faith in the potential of each individual to contribute to the common good. He draws attention to the function of rights in securing the opportunity for personal growth and, by extension, the potential for each individual to contribute to the growth of her community.

3 Deweyan Growth

Having established its centrality in his social and political philosophy, let us turn a critical gaze toward Dewey's conception of growth. For Dewey, growth is "the only moral 'end'" (*MW* 12, p. 181), the only thing valuable for its own sake, and thus is foundational to his moral conception of democracy as a personal and social ideal. "Growth" is Dewey's term for a

form of human flourishing that involves progressively integrative transactions between tradition and novelty—between well-worn habits and creative impulses. It is fostered not only in educative transactions between one generation and the next, but also in transactions across cultural difference, since the habits of one group may be novel to another group. Despite the positive value Dewey assigns to diversity, however, I argue that his definition of growth as the progressive integration of diverse experiences into a coherent whole overemphasizes unity. After unpacking and critiquing Dewey's theory of growth, I gesture toward a reconstructed theory of growth that is better suited to the radical pluralism characteristic of democratic societies.

3.1 Growth as Human Development

According to Dewey's naturalistic view of human development, we are constantly evolving through transactions with our physical and cultural environment, not toward any fixed end (or *telos*), but in order to ameliorate current problematic situations and better equip ourselves to cope with future contingencies. An important difference between Dewey's conception of growth and, say, Aristotle's conception of human flourishing (or Martha Nussbaum's conception of human capability) is that Dewey does not posit specific traits a human must develop in order to realize her inherent potential. For Dewey, because human nature is flexible and adaptive, there is no fixed human essence and thus there are no core capacities that, when developed, constitute our *telos* or end. Given the Darwinian insight into the malleability and contingency of human nature, no list of capacities can be final and no particular capacities are intrinsically more valuable than others. Our self-development is open ended, fluid, and should not to be circumscribed by prior notions of what a human being is or should be.

On Dewey's view, then, growth does not have an end outside itself; rather, it is a continuous process with no fixed end other than more growth. His refusal to specify a fixed end

for growth prompted C. Wright Mills to object that Dewey fails to provide a way to distinguish between good growth and bad growth (Mills 1964, pp. 457-8). However, to define the end of growth in advance of further development would foreclose unforeseeable possibilities and leave us unable to adapt to future contingencies. As Richard Rorty puts the point, to specify a criterion for growth "would cut the future down to the size of the present. Asking for such a criterion is like asking a dinosaur to specify what would make for a good mammal or asking a fourth-century Athenian to propose forms of life for the citizens of a twentieth-century democracy" (1999, p. 120). Dewey's refusal to specify a fixed end for growth reflects his principled insistence that our "ends" must be defined provisionally, relative to our current needs and in the light of our current stage of growth.

A further response to the objection that Dewey fails to offer a positive criterion for growth comes into view once we appreciate the distinction between growth that forestalls later development and growth that allows for continuous development. Whereas learning skills particular to an anti-social group (such as a criminal gang) is a kind of growth that has a definite limit and forecloses later development, learning how to interact flexibly with others creates the conditions for more growth. The former kind of growth is bad insofar as it blocks more growth, but the latter kind is good insofar as it allows for continuous productive transactions across difference in an ever-evolving and multifaceted physical and social world (*LW* 13, pp. 19-20).

In terms of human development, growth is not a process that begins in immaturity and terminates once a pre-defined state of maturity is reached. Immaturity, on Dewey's view, is not the privation of maturity but rather is the "primary condition of growth" (*MW* 9, p. 46). Indeed, he argues that two aspects of immaturity in particular—dependence and plasticity—are crucial to our capacity for growth. For Dewey, dependence is not a weakness but a positive power that

enables us to develop social bonds, thereby enriching ourselves and contributing to the interconnectedness of the community.[15] The physical weakness of young children, which occasions their dependence on adults, is accompanied by the "*power* to enlist the cooperative attention of others" (*MW* 9, p. 48; emphasis original). "Few grown-up persons," Dewey laments, "retain all of the flexible and sensitive ability of children to vibrate sympathetically with the attitudes and doings of those about them" (*MW* 9, p. 48). From this perspective, the individualism Dewey associates with classical liberalism, which places undue emphasis on rugged self-reliance, misses the personal and social value of relationships forged in recognition of mutual dependence.

Plasticity, too, is a positive power that accompanies immaturity, since it enables us to learn and make adjustments in the light of experience. Dewey argues that unlike "the plasticity of putty or wax," which is merely "a capacity to take on change of form in accord with external pressure," human plasticity is "the power to retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation" (*MW* 9, p. 49). Further, the plasticity of human infants accounts for our greater capacity for growth, as compared to animals that mature faster. For example, Dewey notes that while a chick is able to peck accurately for food within hours of hatching, a human infant takes months to develop the hand-to-eye coordination necessary to grasp objects. The apparent disadvantage of human infants is accompanied by the greater advantage of learning, through "the *multitude* of instinctive tentative reactions and the experiences that accompany them," to develop methods suitable for coping with a wider variety of future situations (*MW* 9, p. 50; emphasis original). In learning not only specific skills for

[15] On this point, as well as in his relational conception of the self, Dewey—along with Jane Addams, with whom he collaborated—anticipates themes taken up in feminist care ethics (see Seigfried 1996 on the relationship between Dewey, Addams, and feminism).

coping with pre-defined situations, but in learning to learn—which is crucial for coping with the complexity and fluidity of human social life—we open up the possibility of personal growth and social progress.

Because it allows us to apply lessons from prior experiences to novel situations, plasticity is necessary for the development of dispositions and *active* habits that allow us to manipulate the environment to suit our purposes better. Active habits require both skill and objective material—that is, they require cooperation between the organism and the environment. Dewey contrasts active habit with habituation, which he understands as adjustment to an environment treated as static ("habituation" is Dewey's term for what we normally would call "habit"). We are habituated to the extent that we simply conform to a pre-defined environment, but in utilizing active habits we transform the environment in the light of some end-in-view. This is not to say that habituation is purely negative, since in practice we cannot alter everything in our environment at once. Dewey notes that habituation provides a stable background for the development of active habits.

We are used to thinking of habits, like habituation, as operating automatically, thoughtlessly. However, as Dewey understands them, active habits engage us with the environment intellectually. "Above all," he writes, "the intellectual element in a habit fixes the relation of habit to varied and elastic use, and hence to continued growth" (*MW* 9, p. 53). Thus Dewey further distinguishes (active) habits from routines and "bad habits" (such as compulsive drinking or smoking), which are disconnected from the intellect and, consequently, are anathema to growth. In Dewey's words, routines and compulsive behaviors "are habits which put an end to plasticity" and thus "mark the close of our power to vary" (*MW* 9, p. 54). By contrast, active habits allow for continuous reconstruction of experience in the light of changing circumstances.

From a Deweyan perspective, the dependence and plasticity associated with children is not to be overcome in favor of rugged self-reliance and rigidity of character. On the one hand, Dewey does not deny that children should learn to care for themselves and to develop specialized skills. On the other hand, he points out that adults who fail to appreciate their relatedness to, and interdependence with, others, and who thoughtlessly fall into routine or compulsive behavior, have much to learn from children. "With respect to the development of powers devoted to coping with specific scientific and economic problems we may say the child should be growing in manhood. With respect to sympathetic curiosity, unbiased responsiveness, and openness of mind, we may say that the adult should be growing in childlikeness" (Dewey *MW* 9, p. 55).

3.2 Growth as "the only moral 'end'"

Growth is not a means toward some fixed end (such as maturity), but is an "end" in itself. Dewey places quotation marks around the word "end" in this context to call attention to his point that growth does not signify "perfection as a final goal, but as the ever-enduring process of perfecting" (*MW* 12, p. 181). That is, growth is an always open-ended and never complete *end*. Dewey dissolves oppositional dualisms wherever he finds them, including the means/end binary. Just as he dissolves the individual/community dualism by stressing the tight interrelationship between the two, he dissolves means/end dualism by noting that every "end" may be treated as a means to some further end, and every "means" may be treated as an end to some prior means.

Dewey suggests that the devaluation of means relative to ends results in a failure to recognize the integral relationship between means, ends, and the production of meaning. On his view, experience only becomes meaningful when means and ends are understood in relation to one another. Meaning expresses the fluid and constantly unfolding relationship between cause and effect, or means and end. For example, when building a house, the material means of

production have their meaning in the context of the end—namely, the house (see Dewey *LW* 1, pp. 280). But though the house is an end in a certain sense, it also becomes a means to other ends that together produce new meanings, etc. The continuity of means-end activity enriches our experiences and gives our lives the open texture characteristic of growth.

Dewey's reconstruction of the means/end dichotomy as a means-end continuum underlies his theory of growth as an "end" which also is always already a "means" to other "ends." His reason for claiming that growth is the only moral "end" is not that growth is the only thing that has intrinsic value. Rather, his point is that there is no discoverable final end or good beyond the ends or goods relative to particular moral situations (Dewey *MW* 12, p. 172). Thus Dewey suggests that we "advance to a belief in a plurality of changing, moving, individualized goods and ends, and to a belief that principles, criteria, laws are intellectual instruments for analyzing individual or unique situations" (*MW* 12, p. 173). His reasoning is pragmatic. "The theory of fixed ends," he writes, "inevitably leads thought into disputes that cannot be settled. If there is one *summum bonum*, one supreme end, what is it?" (*MW* 12, p. 174). By contrast, adoption of Dewey's meliorism—his "belief that the specific conditions which exist at one moment ... may be bettered" (*MW* 12, pp. 181-2)—engages us in the constructive project of improving problematic situations as they arise. Because means and ends are interrelated and no end is regarded as final, both means *and ends* may be adjusted in the light of unfolding experience. In this way, "the process of growth, of improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result, becomes the significant thing" (*MW* 12, p. 181).

If, as Dewey argues, growth is the only moral "end," then ultimately the moral criterion for evaluating government institutions is whether they promote growth. Indeed, for Dewey, the meaning and purpose of all social institutions, from schools to private businesses,

> is to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals, without respect to race, sex, class or economic status. And this is all one with saying that the test of their value is the extent to which they educate every individual into the full stature of his possibility. Democracy has many meanings, but if it has a moral meaning, it is found in resolving that the supreme test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements shall be the contribution they make to the all-around growth of every member of society. (*MW* 12, p. 186)

This quotation underscores the interrelatedness of Dewey's conception of democracy with his conceptions of individuality, community, and growth. For it is only in a social context—that is to say, in a community—that growth is possible, and thus for human persons to develop their individuality.[16] The health of the individual depends on the health of the community, and the health of both consists in their continuous and mutually reinforcing growth. And for Dewey, it is only in a society committed to democracy as a way of life that these conditions can be met.

3.3 Toward a Reconstruction of Deweyan Growth

Dewey's characterization of growth in terms of the progressive integration of diverse experiences into a more unified whole, both for an individual and for a community, gives short shrift to the moral significance of the fact that all experiences cannot (or should not) be reconciled under a single conceptual and normative framework. Given the deep diversity that persists in liberal democratic societies, we can assume that, realistically, such unification never can be completed. More importantly, a pluralistic community like ours could achieve and sustain unity among its members only through the unjust use of coercive force (which Dewey rejects).

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[16] This is not to say that Dewey discounts introspection or the life of the mind. Indeed, for Dewey, the material needed for introspection and a rich mental life is given and developed within human social life.

On the one hand, Dewey would be the first to acknowledge that actual unification is unattainable in a liberal society committed to freedom and equality, given the open texture of his conception of individual growth and his claim that democracy is a moral ideal that always is ahead of us. He understood that the complexity and interconnectedness of our social world endows most of us with multiple identities that shape our individuality—these identities may be forged by the various and often incongruous roles we play in our personal, professional, and/or public lives.[17] He notes that "selfhood ... is in the process of making, and that any self is capable of including within itself a number of inconsistent selves, of unharmonized dispositions" (*MW* 14, p. 96). On the other hand, Dewey views the self-making process as a progressive integration of our inconsistent selves: "There is no one ready-made self behind activities. There are complex, unstable, opposing attitudes, habits, impulses, which gradually come to terms with one another, and assume a certain consistency of configuration, even though only by means of a distribution of inconsistencies which keeps them in water-tight compartments, giving them separate turns or tricks in action" (*MW* 14, p. 96). He never pauses over the moral and political implications present in the possibility of holding diversity in tension. Indeed, the value he places in diversity seems to be limited to its role as a spur to further unification.[18]

From a democratic perspective, the problem with overthematizing unification, as Dewey does, is that, in practice, processes of unification tend to privilege the entrenched values of the

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[17] William James states this view clearly when he writes: "We do not show ourselves to our children as to our club companions, to our customers as to the laborers we employ, to our own masters and employees as to our intimate friends. From this there results what practically is a division of man into several selves; and this may be a discordant splitting ..." (1892, p. 47).

[18] For example, in *Art as Experience*, Dewey writes, "The moment of passage from disturbance into harmony is that of intensest life. In a finished world [i.e., one with no conflict], sleep and waking could not be distinguished. In one wholly perturbed, conditions could not even be struggled with. In a world patterned after ours [i.e., one that is partially unified and partially conflicted], moments of fulfillment punctuate experience with rhythmically enjoyed intervals" (*LW* 10, p. 22).

dominant group while marginalizing differences that are discordant with the hegemonic moral and political order. If growth-as-unification is the only moral end, then the practices, beliefs, and values of minority groups that cannot be harmonized with those of the majority are likely to be regarded as deviant, as threats to the moral health of the larger community, and therefore to be ignored, marginalized, or suppressed. Dewey's commitment to human equality, when confronted with incommensurable culturally situated perspectives, suggests an unacknowledged commitment to hold such conflicting experiences in tension rather than attempt to subsume one perspective into another (or to repress aspects of ourselves in "water-tight compartments"). Nevertheless, his moral ideal of the unified self problematizes the identities of individuals and peoples with uneasily integrated selves. And, at the social level, the ideal of unification threatens to create persistent (if not permanent) minorities who are excluded from a community defined by a shared self-conception.

Although I agree that growth *tends* toward self-unification in relation to our social and physical environment, my claim is that Dewey's notion of growth should be reconstructed and expanded in the light of experiences of intersectional subjects (individuals who embrace multiple and conflicting group-associated identities). Here we can supplement Dewey by turning to Gloria Anzaldúa's and Maria Lugones's theories of plural identity.[19] Their work demonstrates that the structural ambivalence inherent in plural identity allows for intelligent self-reflection and sympathetic understanding—democratic virtues essential for self-development and community building. The ability to identify with conflicting perspectives allows for a richer and more internally varied self-conception that better enables us to forge connections between diverse individuals and groups in an increasingly complex and pluralistic social world. At the same time,

[19] Not to be confused with multiple personality disorder (see note 3).

plural identity calls into question narrowly epistemic conceptions of democracy, since it resists the notion that all experiences can be integrated into a single vision of "Truth." Thus it presents a challenge to deliberative democratic theorists, such as Jürgen Habermas, who claim that political deliberation always can (in principle if not in fact) arrive at decisions that enjoy "universal validity."

Gregory Pappas has claimed that "[i]f Dewey were alive today he would be interested in, and on the side of" Chicana feminist theorists, such as Anzaldúa and Lugones (2001, p. 152). The lived experiences of Chicana feminists disrupt notions of identity that insist on the internal coherence of the self. Lugones repudiates what she sees as a pervasive "logic of purity," according to which persons who have plural identities are seen as impure, deviant, and whose experiences thus are ignored or repressed. She and Anzaldúa "reject the either/or option between masculine/feminine as well as the one between Latina/American" (Pappas 2001, p. 154). In place of the binary logic of purity, which assumes that what is plural can be separated into discrete "watertight" units, Lugones recommends a logic of curdling, which views separation in terms of degrees of coalescence—as when mayonnaise curdles, leaving "yolky oil and oily yolk" (Lugones 1994, p. 459). As Pappas explains, "'curdled beings' can affirm their multiplicity without conceiving themselves as fragmented into pure parts" (2001, p. 154).

Anzaldúa's notion of "mestiza consciousness" captures the psychic dimension of curdled being, or, what Anzaldúa terms *mestiza*[20] identity. She explains that, in internalizing conflicting conceptual and normative perspectives, *la mestiza*

> ... is subjected to a swamping of her psychological borders. She has discovered that she

[20] The word "mestiza" traditionally refers to a woman of mixed race, especially Spanish and American Indian. However, Edwina Barvosa-Carter notes that the concept of mestiza consciousness may be expanded to encompass any "subjectivity characterized by a diversity of different identities and worldviews that mingle and collide within the self" (2007, p. 6-7).

> can't hold concepts or ideas in rigid boundaries. The borders and walls that are supposed to keep the undesirable ideas out are entrenched habits and patterns of behavior; these habits and patterns are the enemy within. Rigidity means death. Only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically. *La mestiza* constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes.
>
> The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns ambivalence into something else. (1987, p. 101)

As Jeffry Edmonds notes, the concept of *mestiza* consciousness strikes familiar pragmatist notes in its "imaginative, pluralistic, tolerant, and reconstructive" character (2012, p. 128). Anzaldúa and Dewey agree that when habits become routine or entrenched they inhibit our capacity for further growth. However, Anzaldúa stresses that it is the new *mestiza*'s plural identity which allows her to break from routine habits in an imaginative reconstruction of her identity that accommodates pluralism, without forcing coherence or setting up watertight psychological borders. The new *mestiza*'s ambivalence does not inhibit growth; rather, the "Western mode" is narrowing insofar as it demands inauthentic unity. I read the horizontal and vertical stretching the new *mestiza*'s flexibility allows for as a mode of growth that defies the convergent thinking

implicit in Dewey's notion of growth-as-unification.[21]

Pappas rightly points out that Dewey's attention to experience, as well as his metaphysics of continuity and emergence, should accommodate the related phenomena of curdling and *mestiza* consciousness. Dewey rejects the atomistic view of cultures as monolithic and sharply bounded entities, since experience (such as the experience of intersectional subjects like Anzaldúa and Lugones) reveals their permeability. "Cultures," writes Pappas, "have a center and fluctuating, indeterminate boundaries. These boundaries are fringes and are places of continuity and interaction between cultures" (2001, p. 157). I would add that individual selves, too, have permeable boundaries that are places of continuity and interaction. More generally, as Shannon Sullivan explains, on Dewey's transactionalistic view, things are understood "neither as completely different and separate nor as completely the same and merged into one"; rather, he understood things "as formed through a constitutive 'back and forth' between each other. Such a dynamic 'back and forth' requires that there be two different things, but it does not translate into atomism because of the constitutive permeability between those two things" (2001, p. 14).

Further, Dewey's view that new things can emerge from transactions between existing things (e.g., his view of mind as emerging from biological evolution rather than as something inhering in a primal spiritual substance) helps to explain how *mestiza* consciousness is not reducible to its constituent parts. The new *mestiza*'s multiple selves are socially constructed as antagonistic, as they emerged from a history of violence and oppression. Her psyche cannot be integrated without remainder. Anzaldúa's new *mestiza* assembles her multiple parts, not into a neatly unified whole, but into "a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts.

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[21] Arguably, Dewey's emphasis on unification reflects his position of privilege, since his identity as a Western, white, heterosexual male is normative and therefore does not entail the sort of ambivalence that Anzaldúa's Latina lesbian identity does.

That third element is a new consciousness—a mestiza consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspects of each new paradigm" (1999, pp. 101-2).

It is tempting to interpret *mestiza* consciousness in terms of Dewey's notion of growth, as Pappas does, since *la mestiza*'s self is enlarged and enriched by the emergence of a "third element" that allows her to break free from prescribed identity categories. But Dewey's definition of growth as the *unification* of diverse experience prevents us from wholeheartedly endorsing this interpretation. On the one hand, contrary to Pappas's claim that Dewey would be "on the side of" Lugones and Anzaldúa, the curdling activity of the new *mestiza* resists the will-to-unification that Dewey's notion of growth requires. On the other hand, if Dewey were alive today, he certainly would be interested in *mestiza* consciousness and the logic of curdling, insofar as they entail personal virtues crucial for social democracy.

In particular, the multiplicity and openness inherent in plural identity enables community building across deep differences. In virtue of their affiliation with oppositionally situated groups, intersectional subjects are uniquely positioned to forge meaningful and potentially transformative connections across difference. The intellectual and emotional flexibility needed to maintain a plural identity compliments Dewey's broader democratic vision. The connections that intersectional subjects forge can enable political mobilization organized around points of commonality, despite differences and historical resentments that otherwise would foreclose cooperation. Further, thinking of intersectional subjects as vanguards of democratic progress dovetails with the Deweyan insight that responsibility for initiating social change rests, at least partly, with those who directly experience problematic existential situations.

A feature of *mestiza* consciousness that constitutes an invaluable democratic resource is

its internalization of both sides of cultural conflict. “We can no longer blame you,” writes Anzaldúa, “nor disown the white parts, the male parts, the pathological parts, the queer parts, the vulnerable parts” (1999, p. 110). By embracing identities that have been constructed in opposition to one another and that are implicated in both sides of historical violence and subjugation, the new *mestiza* is in a position to diffuse historical resentments that threaten to calcify divisions rooted in differences of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or political ideology.

For example, Anzaldúa describes an experience she had at a feminist academic conference that devolved into antagonistic factions. Women of color protested exclusions of their particular concerns, while many white women felt unjustly attacked as racist for focusing on what they perceived to be common ground among all feminists. As she tells it, Anzaldúa must decide whether to join the protest or not. “Women of color will brand you [Anzaldua, writing of herself in the second-person] disloyal if you don’t walk out with them [and] lesbians will think you not queer enough” (2002, p. 566). However, rather than walk out (which would have purified her self-conception), she utilizes her plural identity as a bridge between the opposing groups. Anzaldúa and other “in-betweeners,” who are willing to accept “doubts and ambiguity,” “reframe the conflict and shift the point of view. Sitting face-to-face with all parties, they identify common bonds, name reciprocities and connections, and finally draft a mutually agreeable contract” (p. 567). As this example illustrates, the new *mestiza* has the potential to foster the social trust necessary to motivate collective efforts to challenge systems of oppression that divide citizens against each other (even as she recognizes that full reconciliation is neither possible nor necessarily desirable).

To realize her full democratic potential, however, the new *mestiza* must enlist the help of

allies who occupy privileged social positions, and who are called to acknowledge their complicity in maintaining systems of oppression. Although this work certainly involves some movement toward synthesis and unification of differences, not all differences can be fully harmonized; therefore, "managing multiple identities involves synthesis and integration *as well as mediation and tension*" (Josselson and Harway 2012, p. 7; emphasis added). As Anzaldúa and Lugones make clear, no amount of deliberation can achieve consensus when opposing groups start from opposing premises—premises rooted in socially and historically contingent group-specific experiences rather than in supposedly universal principles.

Although the legacy of sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination in the United States has created identities that cannot be unified fully, conflicting identities can be sustained in a single consciousness (though this may sometimes entail pain). For Anzaldúa, her Latina identity and her lesbian identity are both important to her sense of self, despite their uneasy relation to one another. Yet these two identities cannot be unified into a coherent "Latina lesbian" self. As Cheshire Calhoun puts it,

> Within Hispanic culture, lesbianism is an abomination. Within the lesbian community, Hispanic values and ways of living do not have central value. As a result, 'Latina lesbian' is not a coherent identity, nor is there a single, unified conceptual and normative perspective which could count as the 'Latina lesbian' perspective and thus no single perspective from which to take issue with both racist and heterosexist oppression. (1995, p. 239)

Despite emotional pain, Anzaldúa is committed to both her Latina and her lesbian identities. Her willingness to hold these conflicting selves within herself attests to her generosity, openness, and

vulnerability[22]—virtues indispensible for the development of a community capable of sustaining deep diversity. For the new *mestiza*, the psychological processes involved in negotiating between conflicting identities without rejecting either or reducing one to the other do not aim primarily at dissolving disagreement; rather, the focus is on ameliorating entrenched resentments, thereby opening the possibility of flexible and productive interaction between the new *mestiza*'s different internalized perspectives. This double movement, toward unity *and* difference, reflects the democratic aim to forge mutual trust, understanding, and respect among groups and individuals whose experiential—and thus normative and conceptual—horizons cannot be merged without remainder.

The criticism I have been pressing against Dewey's theory of growth amounts to the claim that its emphasis on continuing unification entails a problematic form of cultural assimilationism, which threatens to erase or ignore important distinctions between differentially situated persons. To be clear, I am not claiming that Dewey promotes the ideal of an unvaried and monolithic society. Sullivan successfully defends Dewey against the charge that he holds a "melting pot" theory of multiculturalism, which would have social groups intermix until all their differences dissolve into a single, homogeneous culture. For Dewey, transactions constitutively affect us without erasing our individuality. As Sullivan also notes, Dewey's transactionalism lends itself to a critique of "tossed salad" multiculturalism as well, which has been suggested as a corrective to melting pot multiculturalism.

Whereas the melting pot metaphor privileges continuity over difference, the image of a tossed salad, with its individual ingredients existing side-by-side but not affecting each other constitutively, privileges difference over continuity. By contrast, Sullivan argues that Dewey's

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[22] Cf. Paul Benson on Lugones, p. 105.

transactionalism suggests a new metaphor for a multicultural ideal—namely, "stew," which provides us with a way of "thinking of difference and continuity together" (2001, p. 15).

> In a stew, the potatoes, onions, carrots, and spices neither melt into one another as do the individual ingredients of a fondue, nor do they remain isolated and separate, as do the ingredients of a tossed salad. Rather, as they are in the pot together, stew ingredients intermingle in such a way that each helps constitute what the others are. For example, ... the flavors of the carrot and onion in a stew impact each other such that the carrot is no longer a carrot, but an onion-y carrot, and the onion is a carrot-y onion. (p. 15)

This image resonates nicely with Lugones's logic of curdling, which thinks difference and continuity together using the metaphor of "yolky oil" and "oily yolk," which characterizes curdled mayonnaise, in place of Sullivan's "onion-y carrot" and "carrot-y onion." But, as Sullivan acknowledges, the stew metaphor (and, by extension, Lugones's mayonnaise metaphor) is problematic insofar as "the vegetables in the stew are passive rather than active" (p. 17). Despite potentially misleading metaphors, Lugones understands the "curdling" of curdled beings as an intentional, reflective activity, and Anzaldúa understands *mestiza* consciousness as an achievement won through self-conscious negotiation between conflicting identities. Likewise, Sullivan understands the process by which individuals in Dewey's multicultural stew affect one another to involve agentic choices and negotiations across difference.

Once we introduce growth as providing the moral "end" toward which agentic activity should direct itself, however, it becomes clear that Dewey's notion of growth is problematic for a pluralistic democratic society. If moral progress is conceived of as the progressive integration of diversity into a more unified whole (or into a more delicious stew, wherein the different ingredients compliment and balance each other), then what becomes of individuals who do not

contribute to the unity of the whole (or the deliciousness of the stew)? Tellingly, in a letter to Horace Kallen,[23] Dewey wrote, "That each cultural section should maintain its distinctive literary and artistic traditions seems to me desirable, *but in order that it might have more to contribute to others*" (qtd. in Sullivan, pp. 17-8; emphasis added). This raises the question, what if a group's distinctive cultural products do not "contribute to others"? Oppressed and marginalized groups in the United States (e.g., African-Americans, Latino/as, American Indians, and LGBTs) have developed literary and artistic traditions partly in opposition to dominant traditions, not to "contribute" to them, but precisely to challenge their hegemony.

Here is where C. Wright Mills's criticism of Dewey for failing to account for the dynamics of power in political life is most pressing. On the one hand, contrary to Mills's claim that Dewey ignores power altogether, growth provides Dewey with a lever for criticizing forms of power that foreclose possibilities for continuous growth. On the other hand, however, Dewey is too sanguine that self-unification and community integration can proceed together without doing further violence to those whose identities have been forged under conditions of oppression, and whose self-conceptions and self-respect crucially involve resistance to assimilationist pressures from the hegemonic group.

Dewey's own fidelity to lived experience suggests that, in our construction of democracy as a guiding ideal, we must take seriously the experience of persons who, due to their identification with conflicting normative and conceptual perspectives, cannot unambivalently endorse a single unified set of values. Our democratic ideals, as Dewey understood, should be rooted in, and remain tethered to, the realities of lived experiences. So we need to go beyond

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[23] Dewey was responding to Kallen's suggestion that we think of the ideal multicultural society as a symphony orchestra, in which each instrument (individual) makes a distinct contribution to the harmony of the music (community). Dewey was concerned that Kallen's ideal may be too atomistic, like tossed salad multiculturalism (see Sullivan, p. 17).

Dewey and develop a social democratic ideal that acknowledges the need to forge connections and locate common ground while also actively guarding ourselves against the will to ignore, suppress, or eliminate differences that resist integration into a coherent whole.

4 Education, Growth, and Democracy

Education, for Dewey, is closely connected to personal growth and progressive social reform, and therefore to his conception of democracy as a way of life that cuts across personal, social, and political modes of activity. Indeed, in *Democracy and Education*, he asserts that "education is all one with growing" (*MW* 9, p. 58). Dewey holds a broad view of education as encompassing the whole sphere of social and political life. He was attentive to the educative function of all social institutions—not only schools (which Dewey regards as crucial sites for educating citizens for democracy), but also the family, the workplace, artistic and literary culture, etc. In opposition to the currently pervasive business model of education, his model emphasizes that education should be directed toward the development of the whole person rather than toward the acquisition of specific (and soon-to-be-obsolete) skills tailored to the short-term demands of a rapidly changing capitalist economy. Finally, given the above discussion of plural identity and its relation to the democratic capacity for sympathetic openness to diversity, it is important to stress the imperative of integrating our social spaces to foster complex and educative relations between oppositionally situated persons and groups.

4.1 Democracy and Education

To function effectively, political democracy requires a well-educated public, since the public is responsible, at minimum, for the election of competent representatives. But again and again Dewey stresses that democracy is more than a form of government; it is also, and more fundamentally, a personal and social mode of life directed toward growth. Democracy in this

expansive sense calls us to participate actively in shaping the norms and attitudes of our community prior to (as well as after) casting our ballots. In a large culturally and socio-economically diverse society such as ours, our attitudes, decisions, and actions impinge in multifarious and often subtle ways on a vast array of interrelated and often conflicting interests. The very complexity of social life calls us to come to grips with the direct and indirect consequences of our actions on others. This demand can be overwhelming. We may be tempted to retreat into solipsism—or worse, into homogeneous and hermetically sealed social enclaves (e.g., fundamentalist religion or political extremism).

Social withdrawal, however, betrays the democratic ethos Dewey urges us to embrace. His democratic conception of education involves the "freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims" (*MW* 9, p. 105). In contrast to the life projects classical liberalism champions, which may be solitary, for Dewey a worthwhile life is inevitably social (see Kitcher 2012, p. 15). Social democracy requires the development of both intellectual and emotional capacities, which help us to recognize and address problematic situations collectively. Intellectually, we must learn to assimilate our own experiences and, through communicative interaction, the experiences of others to our conception of a shared physical and social world. Having a rich and comprehensive conception of the world positions us to help shape its future development. Emotionally, we must learn to sympathize and forge common bonds with those whose life experiences may be very different from our own.

This sympathetic understanding better positions us to appreciate our shared human vulnerability and mutual dependence. James Farr credits Dewey for giving prominence to the role of sympathy in moral psychology and social life. Farr explains that, for Dewey, "sympathy was a capacity of the imagination that could be cultivated to understand and identify moral

commonalities with others" (Farr 2004, p. 16). To recall our earlier discussion of his concept of community, for Dewey, social life is constituted by communicative transactions that forge conceptual and emotional bonds between individuals. Since, on his view, our individual identity is constituted by socially acquired habits and attitudes, communication plays a significant role in shaping our personality. In this way, communication is essential to education.

Dewey points out that it is not only the receiver who is affected in communication, but also the communicator. The receiver "shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far ... has his own attitude modified," while the one who communicates is modified in virtue of having to formulate the message in a way that will be understood by the receiver (Dewey *MW* 9, p. 8). "To formulate," writes Dewey, "requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see it, considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be got into such a form that he can appreciate its meaning" (*MW* 9, pp. 8-9). All communication—and, by extension, all social life—is educative insofar as it provides us with the experiential and conceptual resources to respond intelligently to a complex and always unfolding physical and social environment. At the same time, communication helps forge common identity insofar as it calls us, at least for a moment, to sympathize with the perspective of the other.

An implication of Dewey's view is that communication involves imaginatively taking up the perspective of the other. Communication, then, requires a prior disposition toward openness. This openness is natural to young children, who depend on others for their own survival and early development. Unfortunately, to the extent that we are acculturated into (inter alia) racist, sexist, classist, and/or homophobic modes of thought and behavior, our willingness to open ourselves to encounters with difference is constrained, making communication difficult or impossible. Rather than try to understand the experiences of people who identify with a different

race, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, or political ideology, we too-often reduce others to simple categories and rely on stereotypes to guide our responses to them. In so doing, not only do we do an injustice to the individuality of the other, but we also rob ourselves of the opportunity for personal growth by means of exposing ourselves to different experiences and gaining access to new perspectives. That is, we block the possibility of educative transactions across difference which allow for the continuous development both of ourselves and of the other. It is important, therefore, to be attentive to the ways our children acquire racist, sexist, classist, and homophobic habits and attitudes. We must structure their education with the conscious aim of combating such destructive tendencies. Further, we must find ways to recover for ourselves a child-like openness and receptivity to others.

4.2 The School as Laboratory of Democracy

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey offers guidance on how to educate the young for a complex, pluralistic society. He is particularly attentive to the role our physical and social environment plays in shaping our habits and attitudes. The environment (both physical and social) structures the field of possibility for our actions; it is the medium in which we develop the active habits that form our character (Dewey *MW* 9, p. 15). Education, then, consists in manipulating the environment in order to sustain or frustrate certain lines of activity. "We never educate directly," writes Dewey, "but indirectly by means of the environment" (*MW* 9, p. 23). And the school environment offers an especially important site for democratic education.

Although Dewey's conception of education is broad enough to encompass all interactive experiences, schools are unique in that they offer a controlled physical and social environment for shaping the moral and intellectual dispositions of the young. On the one hand, because the world outside of schools is too complicated for the young to grapple with all at once, schools

provide a simplified environment that is made more complex only gradually as children develop their capacities. On the other hand, schools also can introduce diversity into the social lives of those whose home environments are overly narrow. Dewey points out that modern society is made up of many smaller societies, many groups with which different individuals identify. Too many of these groups do not interact flexibly with one another, but "intermingling in the school of youth of different races, different religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment. Common subject matter accustoms all to a unity of outlook upon a broader horizon than is visible to the members of any group while it is isolated" (Dewey *MW* 9, p. 26). Even if we reject Dewey's strong suggestion that schools can or should acculturate children "to a unity of outlook," we can appreciate the importance and urgency of the weaker claim that schools can and should build bridges between different social groups.

4.3 Educating the Growing Self

For Dewey, education should be directed toward the development of the whole person. He lamented the focus on training that merely teaches specialized skills suited to specific jobs in the labor market without also developing broader human capabilities. Such narrow training stunts personal and social growth—even if it fosters *economic* growth (in terms of GDP) by ensuring the continued existence of a suitably qualified labor force. Social democracy requires a broad education that allows individuals to view their own activities, including but not limited to their vocational activities, in relation to broader social forces. As Dewey argues, "since the worker is to be an integral part of a self-managing society, pains must be taken at every turn to see that instead of being prepared for a special, exclusive, practical service, as a hide might be prepared for a shoemaker, he is educated into ability to recognize and apply his own abilities—is given self-command, intellectual as well as moral" (*MW* 10, p. 141).

Education, properly understood, does not aim toward the achievement of any particular skill (this is mere training); rather, education aims to develop flexible habits that allow for continuous and socially conscientious growth. Dewey's point is not to disparage manual, low-skilled labor, as Nel Noddings has charged. Noddings argues that Dewey is insufficiently "sensitive to the plight of those who must do unpleasant, boring, or physically difficult but necessary work" (2010, p. 272). Perhaps Dewey is overly optimistic that we can build a society were nobody would have to endure unpleasant and boring labors. But Noddings's criticism misses Dewey's core point that our education should recognize that there is much more to being a human person than performing any job, whether low- or high-skill. He argues for an education that provides raw material for the imagination so that "in the inevitable monotonous stretches of work, it may have worthy material of art and literature and science upon which to feed" (*MW* 10, p. 140).

In collaboration with Dewey, Jane Addams put these educational ideas into practice at Hull House (a settlement house located in Chicago, which Addams co-founded with Ellen Gates Starr in 1889). Addams provided the working poor with access to art and literature in order to "feed the mind of the worker, to lift it above the monotony of his task, and connect it with the larger world" (Addams 1910, p. 435). Her success was confirmed by a member of Hull House's Shakespeare Club, who reported to Addams that "her mind was peopled with Shakespeare characters during her long hours of sewing in a shop, that she couldn't remember what she thought about before she joined the club, and concluded that she hadn't thought about anything at all" (1910, p. 435). For Addams and Dewey, the point is not to provide an entertaining mental distraction for workers (an intellectual "opiate of the masses"), but to stimulate the mental life of workers so that their own immediate activity can be placed and reflectively evaluated within a

larger social and political context. Thus education is put in the service of social democracy rather than the capitalist economy alone.

Dewey celebrated the fact that "the right of each individual to spiritual self-development and self-possession, and the interest of society as a whole in seeing that each of its members has an opportunity for education, have been recognized in publicly maintained schools with their ladder from kindergarten through the college to the engineering and professional school" (*MW* 5, p. 400). Unfortunately, since the 1955 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that ordered the racial integration of U.S. schools, many schools have resegregated. Elizabeth Anderson notes that, "Since the 1980s courts have largely suspended enforcement of *Brown*, while sharply constraining the freedom of schools to practice voluntary racial integration. Schools have been quietly resegregating—in some regions to levels that exceed those that obtained before ... *Brown*" (2010, p. 1). Indeed, African-Americans and Latino/as account for more than ninety percent of the student population in underfunded and underperforming urban schools; by contrast, most white children attend either private schools or better-funded suburban schools (see Kozol 2005, p. 18). Dewey's reflections on the educative value of diversity speak to the urgent need to better integrate our schools. Our de facto segregated school system does a grave disservice to the minorities who populate underperforming schools, while well-funded private and suburban schools provide their students with the social and technical skills necessary for material success in a capitalist economy that exists alongside—and in cooperation with—racist and patriarchal power structures. At the same time, however, by recreating the racially and socioeconomically homogeneous environment that their students already inhabit, well-funded private and suburban schools deprive students of opportunities to engage with and learn from people with different backgrounds and experiences than themselves.

Today we are divesting public resources from our schools and universities and allowing private interests to set up charter schools and fund our public universities. By privatizing education, we, as individuals and as a community, deny our complicity in the consequences as we allow market pressures free reign to shape the direction of our own (and our children's) development. Recognizing that education is a matter of public concern, rather than a mere means to provide the labor market with whatever skills it happens to demand, allows us to participate in meaningful deliberation on the proper aims and methods for educating democratic citizens who are responsible to each other as well as to their employers. From a Deweyan perspective, it is clear that the state of our public school system betrays our right to develop our intellectual and emotional capacities. Rather than educate individuals to participate reflectively in their own self-development (that is, rather than educate for growth), we merely train future workers to fill positions in the labor market—positions that may become obsolete in the next business cycle. At many colleges and universities in the United States, humanities departments are being decimated as more resources are shifted to support business and engineering programs. Although preparation for productive labor is important (both for the dignity of the individual and for the maintenance of society), a too narrow education deprives us of the chance to develop our distinctively human capacities, such as the ability to interpret and interact intelligently and sympathetically with a complex and pluralistic physical and social world.

The lesson Deweyans can take from Anzaldúa and Lugones is that, just as a community can incorporate conflicting groups without losing its identity, a democratic education that exposes us to a multiplicity of differentially situated perspectives can allow us to incorporate plural and sometimes conflicting group-affiliated selves into a single agentic citizen/self. Indeed, given the irreducible pluralism of contemporary liberal democratic societies, the only way to

authentically "unify" ourselves is to take ownership of the multiplicity within us, which is a reflection of the multiplicity of social forces—some of which clash—that have shaped us. An adequate theory of growth must allow a structural role for pluralism. As the outcome of multi-perspectival deliberation, actions that flow from an ambivalent psyche may promote self-development, social progress, and (therefore) democracy.[24] Thus we need a conception of growth that thinks difference and unity *together*—as opposed to Dewey's, which thinks difference as merely instrumental to a greater unity. In the next chapter, I explore how Richard Rorty's neopragmatist theory of liberal ironism, despite its limitations, can help point the way forward.

[24] Empirical research into political psychology has shown that a tolerance for ambivalence is associated with thoughtfulness and open-mindedness. For example, Thomas Rudolph and Elizabeth Popp have found that "ambivalence tends to be greater among the well informed and those who are high in need for cognition while it tends to be lower among those motivated by [merely] directional goals" (2007, p. 563).

CHAPTER II

RICHARD RORTY, POSTMODERN DEMOCRACY, AND THE PLURAL SELF

Just as John Dewey was among the most widely discussed thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Richard Rorty, who many view as Dewey's intellectual heir, is among the most widely discussed of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As Christopher Voparil notes in his introduction to *The Rorty Reader*, Rorty's influence extends far beyond the narrow province of American academic philosophy: "Books of his have been translated into over twenty languages and his ideas debated in leading journals in fields as diverse as political theory, sociology, legal studies, international relations, feminist studies, literary theory, business ethics, educational theory, and of course philosophy" (Voparil 2010, p. 1). Because Rorty has been perhaps the most prolific and influential interpreter and proponent of Dewey's social and political thought, it is important to take account of his development of Deweyan themes. More importantly, placing Dewey and Rorty in conversation not only helps us better see the limitations of their respective views, but also brings into focus a synthesis between them which affords a conception of the ideal self—a plural self—that is well-equipped to promote both personal and social growth within a diverse liberal democratic community.

In his groundbreaking book, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty endorses John Dewey's vision for a society in which "culture is no longer dominated by the ideal of objective cognition but by that of aesthetic enhancement" (Rorty 1979, p. 13). Rorty follows Dewey in rejecting the idea of "Truth" as the aim of inquiry and replacing it with a conception of "aesthetic enhancement" as the aim of communication across difference. This aesthetic enhancement (which Dewey refers to as "growth") is, as I argued in chapter one, central to Dewey's moral conception of democracy as a personal and social ideal. Recall that, for Dewey, growth is a

process by which experienced differences are harmonized into a greater whole—both within the self and within the community. Although Deweyan growth is meant to overcome social fragmentation and promote individual flourishing, chapter one highlighted its anti-democratic implications. Specifically, Dewey's emphasis on harmonization risks alienating individuals and groups whose identities are incongruous with hegemonic beliefs and values.

In this chapter I demonstrate that Rorty offers crucial resources for reconstructing Deweyan growth in view of the stubborn reality of deep and persistent divisions between citizens. At the same time, however, I argue that his failure to follow Dewey in rejecting the private/public dichotomy of traditional liberalism and his consequent (mis-)understanding of growth as a personal project without political implications blocks Rorty from seeing the interconnectedness of personal growth and social growth. Drawing once more on Gloria Anzaldúa's insights as a politically engaged subject with a plural and divided consciousness, I hope to articulate a conception of the democratic citizen/self that brings together the respective strengths of Dewey's and Rorty's views while avoiding their respective anti-democratic implications.

Rorty suggests a conception of the plural self that, in contrast to Dewey's ideal of the unified self, helps us better appreciate the crucial role multiplicitous subjectivity plays in our self-development. Unfortunately, though, he explicitly denies that containing a plurality of normative and conceptual perspectives within the self has any political utility. He argues that sustaining our liberal democratic culture requires banal conformism in the public sphere, even as he encourages us to experiment with pluralism and novelty in our private lives. For Rorty, the ideal citizen keeps private her plural and internally divided self, while she presents to the public a self unified by the core political principles she shares with other citizens socialized into a

liberal democratic system of beliefs and values.

The sharp dichotomy Rorty upholds between the private and the public self is unsustainable, however. The expectation that individuals keep their private beliefs and values from shaping their public roles imposes an unreasonable burden on them. Further, it is anti-democratic to block issues from the public agenda (by assigning them to the "private" sphere) in advance of actual deliberation. I will argue that once we set aside the private/public dichotomy, we can begin to see the social and political implications of Rorty's theory of the plural self and its potential democratic value.

In making my argument, I return to Anzaldúa's conception of "*mestiza* consciousness"—a mode of consciousness characteristic of individuals whose identities are forged within multiple and conflicting group-specific normative and conceptual frameworks. Contrary to Rorty's merely aesthetic conception of the plural self, Anzaldúa's "new *mestiza*," like Dewey's unifying self, is inherently political, as she must actively *and publicly* negotiate between the demands of competing groups. But unlike Dewey, Anzaldúa does not assume the demands of conflicting groups always can (or should) be harmonized. Thus both Dewey and Anzaldúa, in their different ways, help us expand Rorty's plural self beyond the realm of private perfection and into the public realm of social justice. Through a critical engagement with Rorty's social and political philosophy (informed by Dewey's social pragmatism and Anzaldúa's theory of intersectional subjectivity), a view of the self and its potential for growth emerges that is richer than Dewey's or Rorty's alone—one that, I argue, not only resonates with pragmatism but also serves as an attractive ideal for citizens of a pluralistic liberal democratic society.

A citizen who values the pluralism and diversity within herself will be more open to positive transactions between herself and "others" who embody difference. By contrast, citizens

who value unity and purification will be less open to otherness and, indeed, may seek to remake others in their own image through informal social controls or through formal laws and policies designed to maintain a single shared communal identity. To better see this point, at the end of the chapter I will look at recent efforts in Arizona to delegitimize the identities and histories of its growing Latino/a population and thereby maintain the hegemony of Anglo-American identity in the face of demographic shifts indicating that the border state will have a majority non-white population by 2020. I will argue that Rorty's insistence that we restrict the free play of plural identities to the private sphere (thereby ruling out any form of "identity politics") leaves him unable to respond to the corrosive effects systems of oppression have on our democracy, as evidenced by racist legislation in Arizona (and elsewhere) and the ostensibly "color-blind" rhetoric used to support it.

1 Background: Shattering the Mirror

Before discussing further Rorty's, Dewey's, and Anzaldúa's competing (but overlapping) conceptions of the self, it will be helpful to see how Rorty's vision for democracy, which he provocatively terms "postmodernist bourgeois liberalism," motivates him to embrace the aestheticized culture he attributes to Dewey and why, contrary to Dewey, he thinks aesthetic enhancement must be privatized. Because his political theory is best understood within the context of his larger project, I begin with a brief overview of that project, which aims to extend Dewey's critique of Western philosophy's focus on the theory of knowledge (traditionally understood as correspondence to a non-human Reality) and its self-image as a "quest for certainty."

Instead of a quest for certainty, Rorty views philosophy as a "literary" genre focused on "continuing the conversation of the West" (Rorty 1979, p. 394). In *Philosophy and the Mirror of*

Nature, Rorty provides a genealogy of Western philosophy's traditional concepts of mind and knowledge, revealing them to be rooted in historically contingent metaphors that have outlived their usefulness and which should be replaced by more fruitful metaphors. He argues that, since Descartes, philosophers have been held captive by the image of the mind as a "mirror of nature," and thus of knowledge as the accurate representation of an objective, mind-independent world. "In Descartes' conception—the one which became the basis for 'modern' epistemology—it is *representations* which are in the 'mind.' The Inner Eye surveys these representations hoping to find some mark which will testify to their fidelity" (Rorty 1979, p. 45). Rorty follows Dewey in rejecting this "spectator" theory of knowledge and replacing it with "a pragmatist conception of knowledge which eliminates the Greek contrast between contemplation and action, between representing the world and coping with it" (p. 11). This pragmatist conception of knowledge is inherently social and democratic, since effectively coping with our shared world requires substantial intersubjective agreement and cooperation.

1.1 Rorty's Critique of Representationalism

To help make his case against the philosophical tradition that runs through Descartes, Locke, and Kant, and which culminated in Anglo-American analytic philosophy, Rorty draws on the work of analytic philosophers Willard Van Orman Quine and Wilfrid Sellars. Specifically, he understands Quine's rejection of "necessity" and Sellars' rejection of "givenness," when taken together, to have made the image of the mind as a mirror of nature dispensable.[25] In his essay "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951), Quine famously argues that the distinction between

[25] Rorty places both Quine and Sellars within the analytic tradition rather than within the pragmatist tradition he is reviving because "[e]ach of the two men tends to make continual, unofficial, tacit, heuristic use of the distinction which the other has transcended. It is as if analytic philosophy could not be written without at least *one* of the two great Kantian distinctions [namely, the analytic/synthetic distinction and the given/postulated distinction]" (1979, p. 171-2).

analytic (necessary) and synthetic (contingent) truths cannot be maintained. For Quine, sentences regarded as analytic, such as "All bachelors are unmarried," are not different in kind from empirical sentences, such as "All swans are white." The only difference between them is that sentences we think of as analytic hold a more central place within our web of beliefs. But it is always possible that future experiences may cause perturbations elsewhere in our web of beliefs sufficient to impel us to question or revise beliefs we had held as "necessary." Thus Quine uproots one of the two traditional sources of epistemic foundations—namely, *a priori* truth.

Sellars' argument against the "myth of the given" in turn uproots the other traditional source of epistemic foundations—namely, raw sense experience. In "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," Sellars points out that in order for us to be aware of something in a way which can underpin a knowledge claim, we must experience it under some description. That is, our experiences are never simply "given." Rather, experiences are always already mediated through concepts, and concepts are linguistic and thus socially constructed. Sellars' rejection of foundationalism erases the distinction between knowledge and justification as an aim of inquiry. "The essential point, is that in characterizing an episode or state as that of *knowing*, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state: we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says" (Sellars 1963, p. 169). For Rorty, the upshot of Quine's and Sellars' combined arguments is that "nothing counts as justification unless by reference to what we already accept, and that there is no way to get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence" (1979, p. 178). He thus substitutes conversation for "mirroring," consensus for correspondence.

Rorty's view of knowledge claims as inherently linguistic and thus relative to a vocabulary has provided fodder for critics who charge him with idealism or relativism (or both).

Consider the claim that Rorty is a kind of linguistic idealist who thinks we "make" the world in the image of our own descriptions of it. For example, Richard Shusterman characterizes the implications of Rorty's "global textualism" thusly: "If our world and selves are contingent and linguistic, we can then reshape them to our tastes by virtuoso linguistic reinterpretation through new vocabularies" (2010, p. 76). But Rorty does not think the world is linguistic; he does not deny that we stand in causal relation to a mind-independent world that imposes pragmatic constraints on our interpretations of it. What he does deny is that causal pressures must be described in any one particular way. Rorty's point, which he takes from Sellars, is that brute features of the world cannot be true or false, justified or unjustified. "Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own—unaided by the describing activities of human beings—cannot" (1989, p. 5). He wholeheartedly accepts "the brute, inhuman, causal stubbornness" of the world, but insists that this should not be confused with "an *intentional* stubbornness, an insistence on being *described in a certain way*, its *own* way" (Rorty 1991, p. 83; emphasis original). A mind-independent "object can, given a prior agreement on a language game, cause us to hold a belief, but it cannot suggest beliefs for us to hold" (Rorty 1991, p. 83).

If Rorty escapes the charge of being a linguistic idealist, his view of knowledge claims as always embedded within some community-specific language, which organizes a shared set of beliefs and values, surely looks like a form of cultural relativism. But here Rorty distinguishes between "relativism" defined as "the view that every belief on a certain topic, or perhaps about *any* topic, is as good as every other" (1980, p. 115), and what he terms "ethnocentrism," the view that "we cannot justify our beliefs (in either physics or ethics [or anything else]) to everybody, but only to those whose beliefs overlap ours to some appropriate extent" (1984, p. 236, fn. 13). So defined, the charge of "relativism" is a red herring. "Except for the occasional cooperative

freshman," Rorty observes, "one cannot find anybody who says that two incompatible opinions on an important topic are equally good. The philosophers who get called 'relativists' are those who say that the grounds for choosing between such options are less algorithmic than had been thought" (1980, p. 116).

1.2 From Anti-Representationalism to Anti-Authoritarianism

Rorty does not claim that there are no standards for sorting out good beliefs from bad beliefs. He merely points out that there are no skyhooks that will allow us to transcend our culturally and historically situated practices. Although we do not have universal standards that allow us to take up a neutral perspective from which to decide between competing belief-systems, we cannot help evaluating practices and beliefs by the light of our own socially and historically situated standards. Rorty notes that "everybody is ethnocentric when engaged in actual debate, no matter how much realist rhetoric he produces in his study" (Rorty 1984, p. 235). Once we abandon representationalism, claims of objectivity appear authoritarian in calling on a transcendent power—"whether the Will of God or the Intrinsic Nature of Reality" (Rorty 2009, p. 257)—rather than seeking unforced intersubjective agreement. Indeed, anti-authoritarianism is the ethico-political side of Rorty's anti-representationalist epistemology.

In one of his last essays, "Philosophy as a Transitional Genre," Rorty identifies anti-representationalism and anti-authoritarianism as the two intertwined threads running from his early work in metaphysics and epistemology to his later ethical and political writings. He writes, "I am a hedgehog who, despite showering my reader with allusions and dropping lots of names, has really only one idea: the need to get beyond representationalism, and thus into an intellectual world in which human beings are responsible only to each other" (2004a, p. 474). It is this anti-authoritarian ideal he shares with Dewey that drives Rorty's postmodernist bourgeois liberal

politics, an ideal that seeks to maximize human freedom while "set[ting] aside *any* authority save that of a consensus of our fellow human beings" (2009, p. 257).[26]

2 Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism

Rorty's vision for the ideal liberal democratic citizen is "postmodern" in the sense expressed in Jean Francois Lyotard's characterization of the postmodern condition as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984, p. xxiv). Postmodern citizens reject the grand narratives (such as Enlightenment rationalism) and foundational principles (God's law, Human Nature, etc.) that served to legitimize classical liberalism. Rorty terms an "ironist" the postmodern citizen who is conscious of the historical contingency of the beliefs and values that constitute her self-narrative, or "final vocabulary." An ironist has "continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses," "she realizes that argument phrased in her present final vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve those doubts," and "she does not think that her final vocabulary is closer to reality than others" (Rorty 1989, p. 73). Rorty claims that her awareness of the contingency of her own final vocabulary renders the ironist unable to take her own beliefs and values (or anyone else's) seriously—including the beliefs and values central to liberal democratic culture.

Rorty's ideal society is "bourgeois" in the sense that its economy is modeled on those of rich North Atlantic capitalist nations such as the United States and Great Britain.[27] Bourgeois liberals "have no quarrel with the Marxist claim that a lot of those institutions and practices are possible and justifiable only in certain historical, and especially economic, conditions" (Rorty

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[26] Rorty restricts even the authority of consensus to matters of public concern. As I will argue, Rorty's conception of the public sphere as cleanly seperable from the private sphere is problematic; however, Dewey offers a way to understand the private and public not as a dichotomy but as an open-ended and context sensitive continuum.

[27] Rorty's use of the word "bourgeois" is meant to rib Leftist intellectuals for whom it is a term of abuse.

1983, p. 585). The bourgeois institutions and practices that thrive under a social democratic capitalist economy, Rorty believes, best provide the material conditions necessary for fostering liberalism's core ideals, which he identifies as individual self-creation and the prevention of suffering. Because these ideals require physical and economic security, Rorty supports combining capitalism with a strong welfare state (Rorty 1989, p. 84).

Finally, Rorty's ideal citizen is not only a postmodern ironist, she is also a liberal. He takes his "definition of 'liberal' from Judith Shklar, who says that liberals are the people who think that cruelty is the worst thing we do" (Rorty 1989, p. xv).[28] Rorty's identification with liberalism, then, signals his commitment to reduce cruelty. And he thinks the classical liberal emphasis on "negative" liberty, or freedom *from* institutional interference in individual lives, is the best mechanism for achieving this. Despite Rorty's frequent invocations of Deweyan democracy, this brand of liberalism contrasts starkly with Dewey's. As we saw in chapter one, Dewey, unlike Rorty, rightly emphasizes "positive" liberty, or freedom *to* fulfill our goals. Whereas Dewey appreciates that robust participation in the public sphere is crucial as a means for achieving both citizens' individual and collective aims, Rorty offers a diminished public role for citizens, who by and large occupy themselves with their own private projects of self-creation.

2.1 Private Ironism and Public Liberalism

The challenge for citizens who embrace Rorty's postmodernist bourgeois liberalism is, in the words of Joseph Schumpeter: "To realize the relative validity of one's convictions and yet stand for them unflinchingly" (qtd. in Rorty 1989, p. 46). To meet this challenge we appeal to the

[28] John Tamborino argues persuasively against this definition of liberalism: "Rather than believing that cruelty is the worst thing that we do, liberals are correctly understood—by definition—to believe that removing liberty is the worst thing that we do. Regarding cruelty, liberalism's commitments are made clear in the issue of 'hate-speech,' where liberties are defended even though they allow cruelty" (1997, p. 67). However, it is not my purpose to critique Rorty's view of liberalism but to highlight his commitment to the reduction of cruelty, regardless of any connection between this goal and liberalism as such.

final vocabulary each of us possesses and uses to justify our convictions to ourselves and to others. This vocabulary is not final because it accurately mirrors Reality. On the contrary, it is final "in the sense that if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their user has no noncircular argumentative recourse" (Rorty 1989, p. 73). Citizens in Rorty's ideal society are (privately) aware that their final vocabulary is an effect of socialization and historical contingency, and therefore can claim validity only for individuals socialized more or less like themselves. They recognize there is no way to escape their socialization to attain a universal perspective. None of us can "step outside our language to compare it with something else" (Rorty 1989, p. 75). In short, postmodern ironists accept that there is nothing outside their own final vocabulary they can point to which will underwrite their beliefs and values. This historicism and ethnocentricism has led many of Rorty's readers to view him as a cultural relativist. As I noted above, however, he can shrug off the "relativist" label as meaningless because there is no practical alternative to "relativism."

Whereas the "commonsense metaphysician" naively attempts to ground her moral convictions in universal Truth, Rorty's ironist constructs her moral identity by looking to literature, literary criticism, and "literary" philosophers such as G.W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. These thinkers "are moral advisors not because they have special access to moral truth"—as "metaphysical" philosophers claim to—"but because they have been around" (Rorty 1989, p. 80). That is, ironists have had a lot of experiences (or have read widely) and thus have familiarized themselves with a diverse range of vocabularies.

According to Rorty, ironist intellectuals do not give "arguments" in support of their views; rather, their method is "redescription." They are skilled "at producing surprising gestalt

switches by making smooth, rapid transitions from one terminology to another" (Rorty 1989, p. 78). These critics provide rich vocabularies that supply material for self-creation, and they facilitate moral reflection by providing new moral exemplars and proposing new ways to incorporate elements of diverse vocabularies into our final vocabularies. However, aside from the role ironist intellectuals play in our projects of self-creation, Rorty, in a rare failure of imagination, is unable to see how they might serve any useful political function (p. 83).

Rorty claims that the ironist inevitably arouses public mistrust—due, in part, to the fact that she is aware of the power of redescription. He explains that most people "want to be taken on their own terms," but the "ironist tells them that the language they speak is up for grabs" (1989, p. 89). Recall that, for Rorty, a liberal is someone for whom cruelty is the worst thing we do. And yet, he observes that "the best way to cause people long-lasting pain is to humiliate them by making the things that seemed most important to them look futile, obsolete, and powerless" (p. 89). For example, consider the humiliation Latino/a citizens feel when redescribed within a deficit discourse that views their very presence as a threat to the "real" United States, the humiliation American Indians feel when their culture is redescribed as "primitive" and "savage," or the humiliation some religious people feel when their faith is redescribed as "superstition." Because ironists are especially skilled at redescription, they have the ability to wield this power to devastating effect.

To constrain this danger, Rorty would exclude ironism from the public sphere, where he would have postmodernist bourgeois liberals do little more than affirm their mutual disdain for cruelty. Meanwhile, their most important and rewarding activity, ironic self-creation, would be allowed only private expression. Not only is *public* ironism antithetical to liberalism (as Rorty understands it), insofar as it allows for humiliating redescriptions of vulnerable groups and

individuals, it also opens the door to redescriptions of liberalism and democracy themselves that threaten to make them look bad. If we read ironist theorists like Nietzsche (Rorty's ironist *par excellence*) for political inspiration rather than private enjoyment, we risk being swept up by illiberal and anti-democratic political attitudes that could lead to more rather than less cruelty.[29]

Rather than counter passionate anti-liberal voices like Nietzsche's with increasingly sophisticated theories of liberalism, Rorty recommends that we just get on with the business of following "[John Stuart] Mill's suggestion that governments devote themselves to optimizing the balance between leaving people's private lives alone and preventing suffering" (1989, p. 63). Rorty's hope, then, is to promote public unity on the liberal dictum that cruelty is the worst thing we do while also making room for a plurality of incommensurable self-conceptions among (and within) individual citizens' private consciousnesses (p. xv). His means of accomplishing this is his suggestion that we institute a sharp division between the private sphere, in which we are free to be as ironic as we choose in our own projects of self-creation, and the public sphere, in which we non-ironically express solidarity on the shared goal of preventing suffering. In short, Rorty advocates for a form of political liberalism that he views as continuous with the tradition in the United States initiated by Thomas Jefferson, who instituted religious toleration and thereby separated politics from "matters of ultimate importance" (Rorty 1988, p. 239).

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[29] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for instance, Nietzsche writes, "Almost everything we call 'higher culture' is based on the spiritualization of cruelty, on its becoming more profound: this is my proposition. That 'savage animal' has not really been 'mortified'; it lives and flourishes, it has merely become—divine. What constitutes ... everything sublime, up to the highest and most delicate shudders of metaphysics, receives its sweetness solely from the admixture of cruelty" (pp. 348-9).

2.2 Rorty's Private/Public Dichotomy

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty considers two objections to his portrait of the liberal ironist. The first objection claims that liberal politics requires foundationalism. On this view, a liberal democratic community cannot be sustained unless there is a metaphysical underpinning for its guiding values. That is, in order to back up our shared belief that cruelty is the worst thing we do, we need to be able to show that it links up with something beyond our contingent linguistic practices, something universal and timeless like Human Nature or God-given Rights. In response to this objection, Rorty points out that the decline of religious faith, which provided a metaphysical foundation for the ethico-political order of pre-modern Europe, has not weakened the fabric of Western society. Despite predictions to the contrary, the willingness to make sacrifices for the future was transferable "from one's hopes for paradise to one's hopes for one's grandchildren" (Rorty 1989, p. 85). We can reasonably expect liberal democracies to survive the loss of other foundational beliefs, too. Rorty observes that "a belief can still regulate action, can still be thought worth dying for, among people who are quite aware that this belief is caused by nothing deeper than contingent historical circumstance" (p. 189). So social solidarity does not require a metaphysical foundation. Communities can be sustained by nothing more than "common vocabularies and common hopes" (Rorty 1989, p. 86).

This response, however, only highlights the urgency of the second objection Rorty considers to the concept of a liberal ironist—namely, that "no one can divide herself up into a private self-creator and a public liberal, in alternate moments, Nietzsche and J.S. Mill" (1989, p. 85). For if we cannot protect our common vocabularies and common hopes from the incredulous gaze of the ironist (by keeping her ironism private), the social glue might not hold. Rorty responds by attributing skepticism about merely private irony to a Socratic hope that "the inner

and the outer man will be as one" (p. 92). He thinks doubts about whether we can be Nietzsche in private and Mill in public stem from a metaphysical belief that our private selves are (or are meant to be) isomorphic with our public selves.

Rorty's worry is that, in order to try making them match up, we will constrain our private selves to fit a homogeneous public ideal, thus losing what is valuable about ourselves as unique individuals. I argue, by contrast, that we may call into doubt whether our private projects can (or should) be hermetically sealed from public effects without either subscribing to metaphysically dubious claims about the nature of the self or abandoning our individuality for banal conformism. Indeed, the public part of the self, as Rorty conceives it, seems to reflect the same naïve Socratic hope he attributes to his critics. Although a Rortyan ironist's public self is not isomorphic with her own private self, her public self is substantively homogeneous with every other bourgeois liberal's public self.

To the extent that the private self is denied any public role, whatever individuality we achieve through ironic self-creation can have little value except to feed our narcissistic desires—assuming the private/public dichotomy actually could be maintained. By contrast, in rejecting the private/public (or the non-public/public) dichotomy and allowing us to bring to bear the full range of our beliefs in open deliberative transactions with each other, Deweyan democracy, as we shall see, allows citizens to be true to themselves while affirming the public value of diverse experiences and ideas. Before we consider Dewey's rejection of the private/public dichotomy, however, it is worth considering whether it is even possible, in practice, to separate private irony from the public realm.

First, let us note that the private/public dichotomy is in tension with Rorty's neopragmatist commitment to the pervasiveness of language. Insofar as our private selves are

effects of language, our selves are always already socially constituted. Although the social forces that shape our private selves certainly include smaller "private" associations (such as the family or a church group), these smaller groups do not exist in a vacuum and so must identify themselves in relation to other groups and the larger public. To a significant degree, then, the private self is an effect of public discursive practices. Indeed, the private self is itself largely a political construct.[30] Once we recognize the socially constructed nature of the private/public dichotomy, we can no longer take it for granted that its function is morally innocent. On closer inspection, we can see that the way the private and public are conceptualized has real political consequences. As feminist philosophers have noted, patriarchal and other systems of oppression have historically depended on instituting and policing the very private/public dichotomy Rorty advocates—hence the feminist slogan, *the personal is political*. By providing a shield from public criticism, the private sphere becomes a space where forms of oppression and injustice operate unchecked. Rorty's classical liberal commitment to "leaving our private lives alone" turns a blind eye to the fact that power and oppression are ubiquitous. Relationships of domination and subordination are endemic in our "private" lives as well as our "public" lives.

As a political construct, moreover, it is instructive to note the ways different groups envision the private/public dichotomy through their own ideological lenses. For example, conservatives and progressives in the United States have contrasting conceptions of the private and public spheres. As political scientist Keith Topper notes, on the one hand conservatives tend to "accept economic inequality as an unfortunate but inevitable effect of free markets" while claiming that "cultural, moral, educational, and lifestyle issues are issues of public concern"

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[30] As Honi Haber observes, "if we agree to the poststructuralist theory of the self and language ... then we must also agree to the thesis that the private sphere and the cultural sphere which include the 'private' cannot be delineated. Both the private and the public are political constructs" (p. 61).

(1995, p. 962). On the other hand, progressives tend to claim that "moral belief, lifestyle choice, and the like are quintessentially private questions and thus should remain free from state control, regulation, and coercion" while claiming that social justice "requires more control over economic affairs and the distribution of wealth" (Topper 1995, p. 962). The upshot of Topper's observations is that what counts as public and private is up for grabs, and the battle over the descriptions, redescriptions, and re-redescriptions of the private and the public interpenetrates both spheres.

Despite the foregoing considerations, it may be argued that, for pragmatic reasons, we should leave some topics aside when discussing politics—topics such as religion or sexuality, which liberal theorists typically regard as private. In one of his more (in)famous articles, "Religion as Conversation-stopper," Rorty applies his private/public dichotomy to the case of religion, which he views as a private matter that is in "bad taste" to bring to bear on "discussions of public policy" (1999, p. 169). Rorty acknowledges that the religious commitments of people of faith inevitably shape their political beliefs, but he thinks that, in discussions about public policy, people of faith should drop all reference to religious premises. Taking his queue from John Rawls, Rorty claims that democracy requires an epistemology "in which the only test of a political proposal is its ability to gain assent from people who retain radically diverse ideas about the point and meaning of human life" (p. 173).

According to Rorty, appealing to one's own religious views about the meaning of life rather than to shared beliefs and values blocks further inquiry that may lead to consensus. "The main reason religion needs to be privatized," he argues, "is that, in political discussion with those outside the relevant community, it is a conversation-stopper" (p. 171). For Rorty, the appropriate response to someone who invokes a religious belief in a political discussion is: "'So what? We

weren't discussing your private life; we were discussing public policy. Don't bother us with matters that are none of our concern'" (p. 171).

As Jeffrey Stout points out, however, a pragmatist like Rorty cannot maintain that religion is "essentially" a conversation-stopper. Stout argues that "the pragmatic line should be that religion is not *essentially* anything, that the conversational utility of employing religious premises in political arguments depends on the situation" (Stout 2004. p. 86). He further notes that, epistemically, religion is equivalent to other non-religious faith claims common to political discourse. He observes that "the same sort of difficulty arises for all of us, not only for religious believers, when we are asked to defend our most deeply engrained commitments, especially those we acquired through acculturation instead of through reasoning" (pp. 87-8). Rorty's ideal citizen (the ironist who is aware of the contingency of her own final vocabulary) is in no better position to defend her commitment to bourgeois liberalism than a religious person is to defend her faith—hence Nicholas Wolterstorff asks, "is it OK for Darwinian pragmatist reasons to stop conversation but not for religious reasons to do so? If so, why?" (2012, p. 45). These are good questions, and Rorty does not have an answer to them.

Ultimately Stout's and Wolterstorff's criticisms prompted Rorty to offer a "chastened, and more cautious, restatement" (2003, p. 456) of his views on the expression of religious beliefs in political deliberations. In "Religion in the Public Sphere: A Reconsideration" (2003) Rorty concedes Wolterstorff's point that "both law and custom should leave him free to say, in the public sphere, that his endorsement of redistributionist social legislation is a result of his belief that God, in such passages as Psalm 72, has commanded that the cause of the poor should be defended" (p. 457). Any law or custom that would restrain Wolterstorff from citing the Bible in support of progressive legislation would also restrain Rorty "from citing passages in John Stuart

Mill in justification of the same legislation" (Rorty 2003, p. 457).

Rorty goes on to say, however, that if someone cites "familiar homophobic passages in Leviticus and in Paul" in her opposition to same-sex marriage or to the repeal of anti-sodomy laws, "though the law should not forbid someone from citing such texts in support of a political position, custom *should* forbid it" (p. 458). Rorty, unfortunately, sees no non-question-begging principle he can appeal to that would allow people to cite the biblical passages supporting progressive legislation while condemning those who cite passages supporting reactionary legislation. It seems to me, though, that the problem with approvingly citing homophobic passages (or citing a homophobic reading of certain passages) is not that they are religious or non-public; rather, the problem is just that they are homophobic.

It is almost a tautology to say that custom should forbid the promotion of immorality. However, which views are moral and which are immoral is precisely what is in question. Although I agree with Rorty that anti-gay policies are cruel and thus immoral, it is important to recognize that the only way we can hope to achieve a meaningful consensus on their immorality is through open public dialogue that includes people with anti-gay views. Through democratic transactions across difference, such individuals eventually may come to see gays as moral equals and thus may be moved to give up their intolerant views. In point of fact, the extent to which gays and lesbians have won greater acceptance can be credited largely to their willingness to make themselves vulnerable before the public and engage in such interactions, despite the risks involved.

Rorty's considered view seems to be not that unshared premises must be prohibited by law or custom, but rather that we should "do our best" to avoid citing unarguable premises, whether religious or philosophical, thus helping to "keep the conversation going" (2003, p. 262).

Stout, however, argues persuasively that political discussion need not be stopped by the introduction of unshared or unarguable premises. Even if articulating such premises leads to a momentary impasse, we can find ways to overcome it. Stout writes,

> It is precisely when we find ourselves in an impasse of this kind that it becomes most advisable for citizens representing various points of view to express their actual reasons in greater detail. For this is the only way we can pursue the objectives of understanding one another's perspectives, learning from one another through open-minded listening, and subjecting each other's premises to fair-minded immanent criticism. (p. 90)

To push Stout's point a step further, it is only by publicly airing various non-shared perspectives that citizens can revise and enlarge their own final vocabularies. Putting the point negatively, restricting public discourse to shared reasons inhibits growth.

2.3 Dewey's Private-Public Continuum

Rorty seems largely blind to the force of the above arguments against his private/public dichotomy. He argues that because there is no antecedently given human essence binding us all together, the projects of human solidarity and private perfection are hopelessly at odds. He writes,

> The attempt to fuse the public and the private lies behind both Plato's attempt to answer the question 'Why is it in one's interest to be just?' and Christianity's claim that perfect self-realization can be attained through service to others. Such metaphysical or theological attempts to unite a striving for perfection with a sense of community require us to acknowledge a common human nature. They ask us to believe that what is most important to each of us is what we have in common with others—that the springs of private fulfillment and of human solidarity are the same.… But there is no way to bring

> self-creation together with justice on the level of theory. The vocabulary of self-creation is necessarily private, unshared, unsuited to argument. The vocabulary of justice is necessarily public and shared, a medium for argumentative exchange. (1989, p. xiii)

I see no reason, however, why we cannot reject metaphysical notions of a preexisting basis for solidarity residing within each of us as individuals while also affirming that self-enrichment and community building can proceed together as mutually reinforcing projects. I agree with Rorty in following Dewey's rejection of antecedently given metaphysical or theological guarantees that the vocabulary of self-creation and the vocabulary of justice can be united. I also think Rorty is right to give up on Dewey's naïve hope that the self and the community can be harmoniously integrated. But Rorty is wrong to turn fully away from Dewey's social pragmatist insight into the relational and transactional nature of an individual's private self and her public roles.

As we saw in chapter one, for Dewey community is not rooted in a shared human essence, but rather is created through social processes that at the same time form us as individuals. The main mistake Dewey makes is to assume that the end goal of self-creation and community building is a unified self harmoniously integrated with every other citizen in a unified community. I have suggested that we should replace Dewey's ideal with a more heterogeneous vision of community, one that is held together by overlapping and crisscrossing solidarit*ies* rather than a single shared set of beliefs and values. Such an ideal would be more consistent with Dewey's social pragmatism, historicism, and his larger democratic vision, which inform his own conception of the relationship between the private and the public.

For Dewey, the private and the public are not rigidly opposed categories. The relationship between them is fluid and dynamic. Dewey rejects the stark private/public dichotomy, whose boundaries philosophers in the classical liberal tradition have attempted to fix in advance of

deliberation and without taking seriously the contributions and demands of all people, especially the oppressed and marginalized. However, in *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey makes use of an open-ended and context-sensitive private-public continuum. There he notes that "human acts have consequences upon others" and that "the consequences are of two kinds" (*LW* 2, p. 243). On the one hand, there are consequences that "affect the persons directly engaged in a transaction," and, on the other hand, there are consequences that "affect others beyond those immediately concerned" (p. 243). Particular transactions that affect *only* the persons directly engaged may unproblematically be regarded as private. But Dewey notes that few (if any) transactions have such narrowly constrained effects. All other transactions, those that affect others one way or another, are *potentially* public in nature. For Dewey, "the line between private and public is to be drawn on the basis of the extent and scope of the consequences of acts which are so important as to need control" (p. 245). Because determining which effects are important enough to warrant public control is subject to (public) debate, the line between the private and the public can never be drawn once and for all. Rather, the distinction itself is a matter of public concern and social experimentation. The private is always already a political, and thus public, construct.

3 Deweyan Wholeheartedness, Rortyan Irony, and Anzaldúan Ambivalence

Although feminist, poststructuralist, and Deweyan critiques all call into doubt Rorty's approach to the project of creating solidarity amidst diversity, I argue that critical attention to the liberal ironist's divided psyche nevertheless helps us appreciate how, pace Dewey, internalizing *and sustaining* a multiplicity of conflicting normative and conceptual perspectives can function as a form of personal growth. I contend that once we free self-creation from the merely private role Rorty assigns it, we can begin to develop a more complete picture of the moral psychology

of the democratic citizen—a citizen who, in virtue of having developed connections to multiple and conflicting group-specific identities, can both critically distance herself from "her own" situated perspective and forge meaningful and potentially transformative connections with oppositionally situated groups. Further, since Rorty rightly worries that ironism can be corrosive to our shared democratic commitments, and since his strategy of insulating the "public" sphere against "private" ironism is undermined by the permeability of the private/public dichotomy, I suggest we follow Gloria Anzaldúa and look toward ambivalence as a third way between ironic detachment and wholehearted commitment. On the view I urge, the ambivalent citizen tempers the extremes of the Rortyan liberal and the Deweyan democrat, while drawing indispensible resources from each for personal and social growth.

3.1 Wholeheartnedness and the Unified Self

As I argued in chapter one, the problem with Dewey's emphasis on unification and wholeheartedness is that it tacitly privileges hegemonic beliefs and values while marginalizing differences that cannot be neatly integrated into the dominant ethico-political order. If growth-as-unification is accepted as the only moral end, then the beliefs and values of "deviant" minority groups are likely to be ignored, marginalized, or suppressed. I also argued in chapter one, however, that Dewey's dedication to human equality, when confronted with irreducible pluralism, suggests he has a more fundamental commitment to tolerance than to unity. And yet, the pragmatic consequence of setting up self-unification as an ideal "end" is to devalue the identities of individuals and peoples with uneasily integrated selves. Further, his ideal of social-unification threatens to create persistent minorities who effectively are ostracized from community life. It is only because of his Hegelian belief that all conflicts can be synthesized into a greater unity that Dewey did not see the problem that Rawls has since placed at the center of

Anglo-American political theory—namely, that liberal democratic institutions exacerbate rather than mollify pluralism (see Rawls 1993, p. 129).

Here Rorty offers a needed corrective to Dewey. For Rorty, as for Dewey, "moral development in the individual, and moral progress in the human species as a whole, is a matter of re-making human selves so as to enlarge the variety of the relationships which constitute those selves" (Rorty 1999, p. 79). In contrast to Dewey, however, Rorty's ideal of aesthetic enhancement for individuals admits of a discordant multiplicity of selves. Rorty endorses Daniel Dennett's view of personal identity as a "center of narrative gravity" and points out that "most people have several such narratives at their disposal, and thus several different moral identities" (Rorty 1997, p. 437). Unlike Dewey, moreover, Rorty understands that this "plurality of identities" gives rise to insoluble moral dilemmas whenever there is a conflict between "alternative selves, alternative self-descriptions, alternative ways of giving meaning to one's life" (p. 437). Inner conflict, then, is the price we pay for self-enlargement in an irreducibly pluralistic world.

3.2 Irony and the Plural Self

For Rorty, having a plural self—and thus the availability of multiple internalized vocabularies—is a necessary condition for ironic self-creation. He says that "an ironist cannot get along without the contrast between the final vocabulary she inherited and the one she is trying to create for herself" (1989, p. 88). But since "persons and cultures are, for us [neopragmatists], incarnated vocabularies" (p. 88), and since vocabularies are always already social, we cannot "create" a final vocabulary for ourselves except by syncretically combining elements from disparate cultures and subcultures. Thus Rorty argues,

We can only hope to transcend our acculturation if our culture contains (or, thanks to

> disruptions from outside or internal revolt, comes to contain) splits which supply toeholds for new initiatives. Without such splits—without tensions which make people listen to unfamiliar ideas in the hope of finding means of overcoming those tensions—there is no such hope. The systematic elimination of such tensions, or awareness of them, is what is so frightening about *Brave New World* and *1984*. So our best chance for transcending our acculturation is to be brought up in a culture that prides itself on not being monolithic—on its tolerance for a plurality of subcultures and its willingness to listen to neighboring cultures. (1991, p. 13-14)

In other words, self-creation and social progress require pluralism, both at the level of culture and within the self. Although Rorty acknowledges the value of the Deweyan urge to overcome tensions when possible, unlike Dewey, he also recognizes that we cannot, nor should we want to, resolve every tension—since these are our only means to achieve greater personal autonomy and further the cause of social justice.

Rorty's particular spin on personal growth, which he gleans from Donald Davidson's reading of Sigmund Freud,[31] allows for a positive structural role for difference in a way that Dewey's focus on processes of integration and unification forecloses. He credits Freud's theory of the unconscious with changing our self-image, replacing our seemingly commonsense notion that a single body contains a single self with a "picture of quasi selves lurking beneath the

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[31] In "Paradoxes of Irrationality," Davidson defends "a few very general doctrines central to all stages of Freud's mature writings":

> *First*, the mind contains a number of semi-independent structures, these structures being characterized by mental attributes like thoughts, desires, and memories.
>
> *Second*, parts of the mind are in important respects like people, not only in having (or consisting of) beliefs, wants, and other psychological traits, but in that these factors can combine, as in intentional action, to cause further events in the mind or outside it.
>
> *Third*, some of the dispositions, attitudes, and events that characterize the various substructures in the mind must be viewed on the model of physical dispositions and forces when they affect, or are affected by, other substructures in the mind. (2004, pp. 170-1).

threshold of consciousness" (Rorty 1986, p. 262). In "Freud and Moral Reflection," Rorty follows Davidson's Dennett-like definition of a "person" as "a coherent and plausible set of beliefs and desires" (p. 262) and endorses Davidson's gloss on Freud, according to which "the point of 'partitioning' the self between a consciousness and an unconscious is that the latter can be viewed as an alternative set, inconsistent with the familiar set that we identify with consciousness, yet sufficiently coherent internally to count as a person" (pp. 262-3).[32] Thus Freud (via Davidson) provides Rorty with a model of multiplicitous subjectivity that "initiates a task that can plausibly be described as a moral obligation" (p. 264)—namely, to "Know thyself," where this now means becoming acquainted with the plurality of "persons" who populate each individual "self."

Like Dewey, Rorty explicitly denies that knowing ourselves involves getting in touch with a common human essence. There is no metaphysical substance that constitutes us and *has* the beliefs and desires with which, for purely contingent social and historical reasons, we come to identify. Rorty urges that we "dismiss the distinction between an attribute of the self and a constituent of the self, between the self's accidents and its essence, as 'merely' metaphysical" (p. 239). We are our beliefs and desires, and nothing more.

Rorty's Freud encourages us to be nominalists about personal identity. "Far from being of what we share with the other members of our species, self-knowledge is precisely of what divides us from them: our accidental idiosyncrasies, the 'irrational' components in ourselves, the ones that split us up into incompatible sets of beliefs and desires" (Rorty 1986, p. 264). Only such self-knowledge will allow us to negotiate between our plural identities. "What is novel in Freud's view of the unconscious," according to Rorty, "is his claim that our unconscious selves

[32] According to Davidson, Freud gives us a model of a mind that "can be partitioned into quasi-independent structures that interact" with each other (p. 181).

are not dumb, sullen, lurching brutes, but rather the intellectual peers of our conscious selves, possible conversation partners for those selves" (p. 264). The unconscious, on this view, is not a reservoir of irrational animal passions; it is a potential site for self-enrichment through transactions across (internalized) differences.

Rorty suggests that in adopting this Freudian picture of a plural self we thus "give up the urge to purification" and "develop what [Philip] Rieff calls 'tolerance for ambiguities'" (p. 267).[33] In Rorty's own terms, Freud helped us to abandon the search for our "true self" and instead develop the "ability to take a nominalistic, ironic, view of oneself" (p. 267). Freud "let us see alternative narratives and alternative vocabularies as instruments for change, rather than as candidates for a correct depiction of how things are in themselves" (Rorty 1986, p. 267). While the constellation of beliefs and desires that make up our plural self is a consequence of "particular, idiosyncratic things that have happened in the history of the race, and to ourselves," we can exercise agency in our own self-development by playing our multiple internalized vocabularies off against each other in order to "revise and enlarge the very vocabulary in which one is at present reflecting" (p. 268).

In describing self-creation as a moral obligation, one might expect that Rorty sees in it some social utility. However, he explicitly denies interest in what he terms "public morality," which he characterizes as the "relatively simple and obvious side of morality" (p. 268). He does not deny that how we treat each other is important, but his focus is on what he views as the more interesting side of morality, "private morality," which he characterizes as "the search for perfection in oneself" (p. 268). This perfection "can take one of two antithetical forms: a search for purity or a search for self-enlargement" (Rorty 1986, p. 269). Whereas the search for purity is

[33] Cf. Anzaldúa 1987, p. 101.

motivated by a desire "to will one thing, to intensify, to become a simpler and more transparent being," the search for self-enlargement is motivated by a "desire to embrace more and more possibilities, to be constantly learning, to give oneself over entirely to curiosity" (p. 269). In contrast to Dewey, who tried in vain to synthesize self-enlargement and self-cohesion, Rorty's Freud provides us with the ideal of an aesthetic life "that seeks to extend its own bound rather than to find its center" (p. 269). Rorty thus applauds Freud for "help[ing] us become increasingly ironic, playful, free, and inventive in our choice of self-descriptions" (p. 270).

Rorty's Freud fosters ironism by allowing us to come to terms with the radical contingency of selfhood. According to Rorty, "by tracking conscience home to its origin in the contingencies of upbringing," Freud helped us to overcome the Kantian notion of a "common human conscience" at the core of our identity as human beings (1989, p. 30). Freud provides us with terms (such as "'infantile' or 'sadistic' or 'obsessional' or 'paranoid'" (Rorty 1989, p. 32)) that are better suited to the construction of idiosyncratic narratives of self-becoming than the moral lexicon of the philosophical tradition that runs from Plato to Kant. Rorty writes,

> The Platonic and Kantian idea of rationality centers around the idea that we need to bring particular actions under general principles if we are to be moral. Freud suggests that we need to return to the particular—to see present situations and options as similar to or different from particular past actions or events.... He suggested that we praise ourselves by weaving idiosyncratic narratives—case histories, as it were—of our success in self-creation, our ability to break free from an idiosyncratic past. He suggests that we condemn ourselves for failure to break free of that past rather than for failure to live up to universal standards. (p. 33)

On Rorty's Davidsonian reading of him, Freud orients us toward a non-teleological concept of

personal growth that does not require conformity to a predefined essence but also, pace Dewey, does not insist on unification as the consummatory "end" of self-enriching activity.[34] This Freudian view of the self thus offers an attractive alternative to the Deweyan view of personal growth, which, because of its emphasis on the process of unification, cuts against the pluralistic spirit of Dewey's larger democratic vision.

Rorty insists, however, that Freud "distinguished sharply between a private ethic of self-creation and a public ethic of mutual accommodation" and that "Freudian moral psychology cannot be used to define social goals" (1989, p. 34). Whether Freud in fact distinguished between private and public morality is a matter for Freud scholars to debate. My concern, rather, is with whether or not Rorty is right to deny that the moral psychology he takes from Freud has any pragmatic social value. But before taking up this question (which I do the next section), we should pause to consider an objection to Rorty's view of the plural self—one that, if successful, could be turned against the hybrid Deweyan/Rortyan view I urge.

One might object that Rorty and I are guilty of erecting our respective political theories on a metaphysical view about the nature of the self even as we criticize "foundationalist" philosophies for doing just that. Against this charge, Rorty points out that his view of the self (and, by extension, mine) is not the *basis* for a political theory; it is an optional model that compliments rather than provides a foundation for his democratic commitments.

> .... If one wants a model of the human self, then this picture of the human self as a centerless web will fill the need. But for purposes of liberal social theory, one can do without such a model. One can get along with common sense and social science, areas of

[34] Davidson proposes his Freudian theory of the plural self as an explanation for irrationality, but he also remarks, suggestively, that the theory can "explain our salutary efforts, and occasional successes, at self-criticism and self-improvement" (2004, p. 187).

> discourse in which the term 'the self' rarely occurs.
>
> If, however, one has a taste for philosophy—if one's vocation, one's private pursuit of perfection, entails constructing models of such entities as 'the self,' 'knowledge,' 'language,' 'nature,' 'God,' or 'history,' and then tinkering with them until they mesh with one another—one will want a picture of the self. (Rorty 1988, p. 255)

Rorty is not denying that a reasonably fleshed out philosophical theory of liberal democracy requires at least a thin view of the self, such as Rorty's view of the self as a centerless web of beliefs and desires. He is, instead, denying that such a view is epistemically prior to the political view it "supports." Indeed, for Rorty democracy is prior to philosophy—not epistemically prior, since he denies that there is any such thing as an "order of reason" (see Rorty 1997, p. 442), but prior in the sense of being a more central commitment for purely contingent social and historical reasons.[35] His view of the self is meant to hang together or "mesh" with his political theory (as well as with common sense and social science) rather than provide a metaphysical foundation for liberal democracy.

3.3 The Politics of Ambivalence

Although Rorty denies that the multiplicitous view of the self he takes from Freud (via Davidson) has any public utility, richer possibilities emerge once we reframe his view in the light of Deweyan social pragmatism, which rejects the dichotomy between private and public morality. Indeed, it seems that there is an internal tension in Rorty's own view of the public function of plural identity. In "Justice as a Larger Loyalty," Rorty suggests that progress toward

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[35] Cf. John Rawls' claim in "Kantian Constructivism" (1980), which Rorty quotes with approval, that "what justifies a conception of justice is not its being true to an order antecedent to and given to us, but its congruence with our deeper understanding of ourselves and our aspirations, and our realization that, *given our history and the traditions embedded in our public life*, it is the most reasonable doctrine *for us*" (qtd. in Rorty 1988, p. 248; emphasis original).

greater social justice—or, to use Dewey's term, "social growth"—is a matter of expanding the circle of persons we view as "one of us." Because Rorty accepts that "one's moral identity is determined by the group or groups with which one identifies" (Rorty 1997, p. 436), social justice depends on individuals acquiring new moral identities by making connections to groups of people who had been outside the narrower circle of persons with whom they had identified (p. 443). And presumably the function of the public sphere in a free society is precisely to provide a site for interactions between diverse and sometimes conflicting groups—interactions that, as Dewey's transactionalism helps us see, inevitably reshape the moral identities of the individuals and sub-groups that constitute the larger community.

To more fully appreciate the social function of plural identity, let us revisit the contribution of Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa. Her work on *mestiza* consciousness helps us see that the structural ambivalence inherent in plural identity fosters democratic virtues essential for self-development and community building. As I argued in chapter one, the ability to identify with conflicting perspectives allows for a richer and more internally varied self-conception that better enables us to forge connections between diverse groups in an increasingly complex and pluralistic social world. Unlike ironism, which implies detached, insincere, and unserious "play," Anzaldúan ambivalence can play a crucial role in fostering solidarity across difference because it begets an inherently engaged, sincere, and serious attitude. Interestingly, though, ambivalence is compatible with Rorty's description of key characteristics of ironism. Like Rorty's ironist, Anzaldúa's new *mestiza* could be described as someone who has continuing doubts about her final vocabulary, who realizes that arguments phrased in her final vocabulary cannot dissolve those doubts, and who does not think her final vocabulary is closer to reality than others (cf. Rorty 1989, p. 73). But none of this entails the label "irony" or its anti-liberal connotations.

If we eschew Rortyan ironism in favor of Anzaldúan ambivalence, the multiplicity and openness inherent in plural identity can enable community building across deep differences. Whereas the ironist cannot take others' (not to mention her own) beliefs seriously, the ambivalent citizen can earnestly appreciate the pull on multiple sides of an issue. In virtue of her engaged affiliation with oppositionally situated groups, a multiplicitous subject is uniquely positioned to forge meaningful and potentially transformative connections across difference. As noted in the previous chapter, the intellectual *and emotional* flexibility needed to sustain an ambivalent psyche enables political mobilization organized around points of commonality, despite differences and historical resentments that otherwise would foreclose cooperation.

Both Rorty and Dewey would endorse Anzaldúa's critique of Western philosophy as dominated by "convergent thinking" that attempts to transcend differences by appealing to the authority of universal and timeless Truth. Rorty is closer to Anzaldúa than Dewey, however, in his rejection of an ethics directed toward convergence for an ethics directed toward self-enrichment that, like the activity of *mestiza* consciousness, "operates in a pluralistic mode."

Rorty's view of the plural self has been criticized by fellow pragmatist Richard Shusterman, who complains that such a self is "the ideal self for postmodern consumer society, a fragmented, confused self, hungrily enjoying as many new commodities as it can, but lacking the firm integrity to challenge either its habits of consumption or the system that manipulates and profits from them" (1994, p. 399). I think this concern about Rorty's plural self is well founded, insofar as self-creation is conceived of as a merely private matter disconnected from public morality. For if we are moved, by randomly contingent desires, toward ever-greater novelty rather than toward sustained engagement with others over issues of shared concern, profit-driven corporations, not our fellow citizens, will happily provide the material for our self-creation. But

if we reject the rigid distinction Rorty draws between the private and the public while accepting Dewey's link between self-creation and social progress, and follow Anzaldúa in linking social progress with plural identity, then Shusterman's criticism of the de-centered self loses its bite. Shusterman assumes that a divided self must be a confused, docile, and superficial self. As I have argued, however, a plural, ambivalent self has the resources to become a reflective, agentic, and deeply engaged participant in the public political culture.

The Anzaldúan conception of the self I have been urging combines the best insights of Dewey's and Rorty's views while avoiding the most problematic aspects of each. By placing Anzaldúa in conversation with pragmatist philosophers, a view of the self emerges that rejects Dewey's insistence on continuous unification in favor of Rorty's acceptance of multiplicity, while embracing Dewey's emphasis on the permeability and fluidity of the private/public distinction. Insofar as this view conceives of self-enrichment as the process of internalizing previously unfamiliar vocabularies rather than as the process of acquiring more stuff, it does have the potential to challenge the complacency and injustice that exist within our society. This view of the self is well suited, not for narcissistic consumers (as Shusterman suggests), but for politically engaged citizens of pluralistic democracies.

Another, related, objection may be raised to the ideal of a plural self who embraces ambivalence. One might worry that, like irony, ambivalence does not provide sufficient motivation for serious ethico-political engagement aimed at ameliorating the structural inequalities that undermine our democratic way of life. Instead, the citizen who finds herself divided between different and incompatible final vocabularies, and who recognizes that there are no universal or transcultural ideals by which to orient herself, may experience her situation as absurd and retreat into nihilistic despair. However, this objection ignores the distinction, which

Simone de Beauvoir has noted, between ambiguity and absurdity: "To declare that existence is absurd is to deny that it can ever be given a meaning;" however, she continues, "to say that it is ambiguous is to assert that its meaning is never fixed, that it must be constantly won" (1948, p. 129). As de Beauvoir argues, "it is because man's existence is ambiguous [thus begetting ambivalence] that he seeks, through failure and outrageousness, to save his existence" (p. 129).

Still, it may be argued that the distinction between ambiguity and absurdity is one of degree rather than of kind, and, at one end of the spectrum, ambiguity collapses into absurdity. To respond, let us first note that the sort of existential angst associated with a sense of the absurd is not among the many problems of individuals who experience their identities as under assault by systems of oppression. Such humiliation and suffering has a way of making life serious. The slide from ambivalence to absurdity or ironism is, however, a luxury for privileged elites who can devote time and energy to contemplating the ultimate meaning of their own lives, abstracted from the broader network of social forces that give their lives form. We might point out, further, that such navel gazing involves the philosophical mistake of forgetting that meaning, as de Beauvoir and Dewey remind us, only emerges in and through lived experience—that is, through actual engagement with the physical and social world.

For some people, however, it is probably true that ambivalence is insufficient to motivate serious engagement with oppressed others. Yet it may be necessary, or at least helpful, to be able to consider things from multiple points of view. And when combined with a sense of empathetic concern and the pragmatist's meliorism,[36] seeing things from the perspective of an oppressed or marginalized other is, I think, sufficient to motivate serious engagement across difference. This

[36] Recently, David Velleman has argued that "belief in the possibility of progress in morality" is sufficient for moral seriousness (2013, p. 97). He also notes, importantly, that moral progress does not require "transcendent moral truths" (p. 97).

point underscores the importance of creating a culture, through formal and informal education, that reinforces our capacity for empathetic understanding. To this end, Dewey emphasizes the importance of face-to-face encounters across difference. Rorty adds that greater empathy for others can also be achieved through art, literature, and journalism that exposes us to a plurality of vocabularies.

4 Rorty's Critique of Cultural Recognition

At this point the further objection may be raised that I am advocating for a form of "identity politics"—a term of abuse in many academic circles. Rorty himself has called into question the usefulness of identity politics (or "cultural recognition") for social progress. He describes the American Left—those Rorty identifies as advocates for social progress—as having lost its way in the post-Vietnam era by turning away from real politics and toward identity politics. He argues that the Left has displaced pragmatic reformism with empty revolutionary rhetoric coupled with a politically impotent focus on cultural recognition.

According to Rorty, Leftists in the United States have come to think that, because of its past treatment of non-Western peoples and other minority groups, our country has become so morally bankrupt it would be better to replace it than to reform it. Specifically, he says,

> once the old alliance between the intellectuals and the unions broke down in the course of the Sixties, [the Left in the United States] began to sink into an attitude like Henry Adams' [an attitude of detached spectatorship]. Leftists in the academy have permitted cultural politics to supplant real politics, and have collaborated with the Right in making cultural issues central to public debate.... The academic Left has no projects to propose to America, no vision of a country to be achieved by building a consensus on the need for specific reforms. (1998, pp. 14-15)

Central to the identity politics of the academic Left is an emphasis on recognition of and respect for difference rather than on commonality. Rorty's contention is that, rather than fostering concrete social reforms, this emphasis on difference displaces real politics—which he believes is better served by building solidarity rooted in what we have in common. However, as I will argue below, not only is cultural recognition compatible with real politics, it is crucial for forging networks of solidarit*ies* and motivating projects aimed at the amelioration of significant but otherwise overlooked forms of injustice.

4.1 Humiliation and Human Nature

For Rorty, the capacity to suffer humiliation is common to all and only moral persons. This appeal to commonality may seem odd in the light of his rejection of the notion of a human essence that could bind us all together. But his observation that we share a vulnerability to humiliation does not commit him to a theory of human nature. Rorty notes that people who appeal to "human nature" do so in order to "tell us what sort of people we ought to become" (2004b, p. 18). Contrary to philosophical and religious theories of human nature that purport to do just this, Rorty denies that there is such a thing as *the* good life. Rather, he claims that "there are many equally valuable human lives," and so individuals should be "free to live whichever of these lives they choose—to make themselves up as they go along, without asking what they were somehow meant to become" (p. 19). Further, he denies that there are (or could be) empirical facts science could discover about human biology which could provide us with any normative guidance. Rorty writes, "science has won its autonomy and its richly deserved prestige by telling us how things work, rather than, as Aristotle hoped to do, telling us about their intrinsic natures" (p. 22). As a consequence, science "lost both its metaphysical pretensions and the ability to set new ends for human beings to strive for" (Rorty 2004b, p. 22). Science can provide us with

means, but it cannot tell us what ends we should pursue.

I do not think Rorty is guilty of inconsistency in acknowledging the shared vulnerability of humans to humiliation while rejecting theories of human nature. But unlike mere pain (which is non-linguistic), humiliation requires a sincere (that is, non-ironic) commitment to a view of one's self as inscribed within one's own final vocabulary. A thoroughgoing ironist cannot be humiliated, because she does not fully identify with any particular description of herself. Such detachment may be a luxury for cultural elites, but oppressed and marginalized peoples are acutely vulnerable to humiliation. Thus in order to sensitize ourselves to possible sources of humiliation, we must know something about the self-descriptions of oppressed and marginalized peoples, about what they hold dear. Blindness to the specific ways in which members of different cultural groups experience humiliation makes it all too easy, even for those with the best of intentions, to alienate entire groups of people. Further, since our self-understandings are products of acculturation, as social pragmatists like Dewey and G. H. Mead (1934) have taught us, building a community from diversity requires not only an abstract "recognition" of cultural, racial, and ethnic minorities, but also *sincere* engagement between different social groups. Such engagement is incompatible with ironism, but it is compatible with ambivalence.

4.2 Commonality and/or Difference

Rorty allows that "one way to eliminate prejudice and eliminate stigma is to point out that, for example, women have a history, that homosexuals take pride in belonging to the same stigmatized group as Proust, and that African-Americans have detailed memories of what Russell Banks calls 'the three hundred year war between The Races in America'" (2000, p. 465). However, he also claims that another (presumably better) way to eliminate prejudice is to "get the prejudiced to see the stigmatized as having the same tendency to bleed when pricked as they

themselves; they too worry about their children and parents; they are possessed of the same self-doubts, and loss of self-confidence when humiliated" (p. 465). No doubt such appeals to basic human commonality can be effective in some cases, but culturally specific forms of humiliation go unnoticed within such a universalistic framework.

In her "Rejoinder" to Rorty's rejection of identity politics, Nancy Fraser offers several instructive examples of cases in which appeals to universality have proven ineffective against specific injustices, including

> ... US court rulings holding that employers' failure to provide pregnancy leave does not constitute sex discrimination because it does not deny women a benefit provided to men; firefighter job application procedures that test climbing speed on ladders designed for persons whose height falls in the normal range for men, thus disadvantaging many women; and regulations mandating uniform headgear for Canadian mounted police, effectively closing that occupation to observant Sikhs. (Fraser 2000, p. 26)

In these examples, as Fraser points out, the problem is not a disregard for what is common to all moral persons, but precisely that "norms tailored to the situation of dominant or majority groups are applied across the board, to the detriment of those situated differently" (p. 26). Their injustice is constituted by the failure to recognize and respect differences. Another example Fraser mentions, "marriage laws that exclude same-sex partnerships" (p. 24), is particularly relevant at the present moment, in the light of the recent achievement of—and conservative backlash against—marriage equality in the United States. Opponents of marriage equality do not deny that gay men and women bleed when pricked or that they suffer self-doubts when humiliated. Indeed, some have counted on these very facts when deploying tactics aimed at terrorizing the gay community.

Of course, most people with moral objections to same-sex relationships are not intentionally cruel. Mainstream opponents of marriage equality typically claim that gay marriage would extend a "special" right to same-sex couples. That is, they appeal to a supposedly universal feature of human beings (that we are "designed" by God or Nature to reproduce through heterosexual intercourse) to make their case against homosexuality and, by extension, gay marriage. They point out that every adult, whether s/he identifies as gay or straight, has the right to marry (where "marriage" is defined explicitly as a union between a man and a woman) an adult person of the opposite sex (who is not a close blood-relative). The injustice in this view is not that it fails to appreciate a universal capacity for humiliation. Indeed, on this view, the humiliation gay couples have felt at being denied the right to marry is optional, something they could avoid by rejecting their gay identity (viewed as a lifestyle choice that *should* be humiliating). Rather, what opponents of marriage equality fail to recognize and appreciate is the importance of sexual orientation to the self-conceptions of many gay men and women. Whether homosexuality has a genetic basis or is a lifestyle choice, for most gay men and women, to give up their gay identity would effectively do great harm to their sense of self. Because of the hetero-normativity of the dominant culture in the United States, the humiliation of being denied the right to *publicly* commit to the person they love (a right that plays a fundamental role in the lives of many U.S. citizens) cuts deeply into gay men and women's sense of self—not merely as fellow human beings, but specifically as *non-heterosexual* human beings.

Still, Rorty cannot understand why overcoming homophobia requires that we '"accord positive recognition to gay and lesbian sexual specificity' rather than just raising our children to think that being gay or lesbian is no big deal" (2000, p. 469). The reason, I think, is the same as the reason why overcoming racism and sexism requires more than raising our children to think

that race and gender are no big deal. Homophobia, like racism and sexism, is more than a negative attitude; it is a *system* of oppression, and, as such, overcoming it will require more than a generation (or even many generations) of non-homophobic citizens.

Overcoming homophobia, racism, sexism, and other injustices that impact people with specific identities will require positive action to address entrenched and largely invisible forms of prejudice that continue to structure our relations to one another through formal and informal social institutions. And that will require recognition of specific harms that are not shared across the larger society. Rorty grants that "white kids badly need to learn the history of the War Between the Races" (p. 469), but he goes on to claim that "that is not the same thing as learning to appreciate the merits of a distinctly black culture" (p. 469). I doubt, however, that white kids could fully appreciate the significance of the War Between the Races without learning to appreciate at least some of the merits of a distinctly black culture. After all, a good deal of the War has been premised on the (false) notion that white culture is superior to black culture (if it is even admitted that blacks have a "culture"). Consequently, the hegemonic "U.S. culture" has been constructed as a white culture—where "white" means non-black, non-Latino/a, non-American Indian, etc.—to which other cultural groups are expected to assimilate. Rorty writes as though the War is over, and that all justice requires is to cultivate a principled blindness to cultural differences. But we need to understand that building a more inclusive culture is still a task before us, one that requires attention to both sameness and difference.

That said, I think Rorty is quite right to say we can eliminate prejudice against gays without having to point out that Proust was gay. He is right to chastise the academic Left for its highbrow references and its narcissistic reliance on sophisticated tools such as "Derridian deconstruction." These things probably have little pragmatic value for real politics. But I see no

reason why cultural recognition outside the academy must take up the points of reference or theoretical devices of the educated elite. As a cultural icon, Freddy Mercury works as well as (if not better than) Marcel Proust. And inherited identity categories can be problematized, reimagined, and even "deconstructed" without citing French poststructuralist philosophers such as Derrida or Foucault. Experience with and of the other, either face-to-face encounters or experience through cultural products (including pop-cultural products such as music, literature, film, and television) can cause conceptual shifts without excessive intellectualization. These projects can work hand in hand with the sort of reformist politics Rorty favors. Although I agree with Rorty that a pragmatist approach to democracy must favor reforms aimed at ameliorating specific problems, I reject his either/or dichotomy between real politics and identity politics. I see no reason why the two cannot work in tandem. Indeed, it seems a politics of identity is necessary to throw light on problems that otherwise would remain hidden from practitioners of "real" politics.

Finally, there is one other common objection to cultural recognition that calls for a response. It is often claimed that the aim of "identity" politics presupposes a monolithic view of groups which ignores internal variation within and fluidity between groups. It is further alleged that identity politics substitutes a fragmented society divided into *competing* sub-groups for the liberal ideal of a community of free individuals *cooperating* for the common good. On the social pragmatist view I have been developing, the vocabularies that constitute an individual's self-conception are always already products of cultural groups. However, the view I am urging also emphasizes that because we all belong to many different and often conflicting groups, each of us, and thus each of the groups with which we identify, will be internally heterogeneous. And it is precisely the recognition of this internal heterogeneity, this multiplicity within the self and within

the community, that enables productive and transformative interactions between diverse individuals and groups. Having a multiplicity of perspectives available to each citizen would allow for more meaningful communication across difference and facilitate a greater willingness to compromise with others in order to address public problems.

4.3 (Multi-)Ethnic Literature and Democracy

Rorty's attack on identity politics is rooted in an ideal of the United States as a "melting pot," an image I criticized in chapter one from the perspective of Deweyan social pragmatism (as informed by Anzaldúa's and Lugones's critiques of the logic of purity). Rorty explicitly rejects the cultural Left's exhortation that "America should not be a melting-pot, because we need to respect one another in our differences" (1998, p. 100). Although he sees himself as a defender of progressivism, his call to "ignore" otherness blocks us from imagining ways to ameliorate systemic and institutional forms of oppression. To see this more clearly, it will be instructive to compare Rorty's critique of identity politics to arguments made in favor of racist policies aimed at maintaining white cultural hegemony in the face of rapidly changing racial demographics that project a non-white majority in the U.S. by 2043 (U.S. Census Bureau).

In 2010, Arizona, which shares a border with Mexico and is about 35 percent Latino (Kunnie 2010, p. 17), passed two House Bills that reflect the anxieties of a white population on the cusp of losing its majority (Arizona will have a majority non-white population by 2020). Arizona followed up the passing of its notorious House Bill (HB) 1070 authorizing State police to detain anyone (read: Latino/as) who cannot produce documentation of citizenship with HB 2281, which brought Tucson Unified School District's (TUSD) successful Ethnic Studies program to an end. Unlike most secondary education in the United States, which privileges an Anglo-American perspective, the program created a space within Tucson high schools reflecting

the unique experiences of Latino/a and indigenous peoples in the United States. This approach fostered a more complete and nuanced understanding of U.S. history and cultural traditions and created a basis for self-respect and growth for non-white students, which was reflected in improved graduation and matriculation rates.[37]

The effort to dismantle the program was led by Arizona's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Horne, who penned an "Open Letter to the Citizens of Tucson" that echoes Rorty's arguments against cultural recognition. In the letter, Horne accuses TUSD's Ethnic Studies program of teaching "a kind of destructive ethnic chauvinism that the citizens of Tucson should no longer tolerate" (2007, p. 2). For Horne, as for Rorty, the best approach toward culture difference is to ignore it. Horne writes, "I believe people are individuals, not exemplars of racial groups" (p. 1). He wants schools to indoctrinate students into the bourgeois liberal view that "this is the land of opportunity, and that if they work hard they can achieve their goals. They should not be taught that they are oppressed" (Horne 2007, p. 2). Ignoring the ways in which the very standards by which literature is judged reflect racist and sexist assumptions, Horne responds to a student who favorably compared Tucson's Ethnic Studies program with traditional English courses teaching only "dead white people" by insisting that "schools should teach the students to judge literature by its content and not by the race or gender of the author" (p. 2).

Like Rorty, supporters of Arizona's ban on Ethnic Studies specifically invoke the image of the United States as a cultural melting-pot. State Representative John Kavanagh, citing the melting-pot model as an ideal, described HB 2281 as saying to Latino/a children, "'You're here.

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[37] "According to district data, students enrolled in the program showed academic achievement levels and graduation rates superior to their peers who were not enrolled in the program. For example, between 2004 and 2009, 68% of MARS [Mexican American/Raza Studies] students passed the writing section of the state's standardized test compared to 23% of students who were not in the program. In addition, between 2004 and 2007, the graduation rate for its students exceeded 97%, whereas White students not enrolled in the program graduated at a rate of 82.5%" (Orozco 2010, p. 47).

Adopt American values. If you want a different culture, then fine, go back to that culture.'" (qtd. in Bustamante 2008). Critics worry that Ethnic Studies programs foster ethnic and racial resentment and thus undermine national unity.

The concern about exposing students to perspectives that challenge the hegemonic (Anglo-European) narrative of U.S. history also echoes Dewey's claim, discussed in the previous chapter, that minority groups should maintain their distinctive cultural traditions only insofar as they can be harmoniously integrated with the dominant tradition. As I noted, marginalized groups in the United States, including Latino/as and American Indians, have developed literary and artistic traditions, not to be subsumed into a unified American tradition, but, at least partly, to challenge Anglo-European hegemony. Although Dewey rightly eschews the metaphor of the United States as a cultural melting-pot, he is too sanguine that different cultural groups with uneven power can be harmonized (if not homogenized) without doing further violence to the oppressed.

For Rorty, who embraces the melting-pot metaphor, the identity politics associated with the cultural Left undermines national pride, and thus our capacity as a nation to envision a better, more just future. "National pride," according to Rorty, "is to countries what self-respect is to individuals: a necessary condition for self-improvement" (1998, p. 3). Hence he urges the importance, for artists, intellectuals, and even politicians, of creating images and telling stories that celebrate our national past and provide an inspiring self-image. The problem with the United States, according to Rorty, is that our self-descriptions are divided between the "simpleminded militaristic chauvinism" of the political Right and the "self-mockery or self-disgust" of the Left (p. 4).

In *Achieving Our Country*, Rorty addresses what he sees as the smug nihilism of Leftist

cultural elites. Embodying this attitude, for Rorty, is a novel by Tucson resident and Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko, whose work (along with Anzaldúa's and other Latino/a and indigenous writers) has been banned in Arizona public schools.[38] As Rorty describes it, Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* "ends with a vision in which the descendents of the European conquerors and immigrants are forced back to Europe, thereby fulfilling Native American prophecies that the whites would be a temporary disaster" (1998, p. 6). Ignoring her position as a colonial subject, Rorty claims that Silko typifies a pervasive view among Leftist intellectuals that the United States, far from inspiring proper pride among its citizens, is "something we must hope will be replaced, as soon as possible, by something utterly different" (p. 7).

From Rorty's perspective, the problem is that, for the U.S. Left, patriotism has become associated with a chauvinistic endorsement of (inter alia) slavery, genocide, ecological atrocities, and unjust wars (1998, p. 7). Cultural elites, he says, think of themselves as having "the insight to see through nationalistic rhetoric to the ghastly reality of contemporary America. But this insight does not move them to formulate a legislative program, to join a political movement, or to share in a national hope" (p. 8). As opposed to the reform-minded activist progressives of the early twentieth-century, contemporary Leftist intellectuals in the United States have become mere spectators of politics. They are unable "to think of American citizenship as an opportunity for action" (p. 11). And insofar as the Left, which Rorty defines as the "party of hope," gives in to such resigned pessimism, it thereby "ceases to be a Left" (p. 14).

Rorty suggests that the Left can revitalize itself by returning to Dewey's vision of democracy as social hope. He insists we can cultivate the sort of national pride Dewey

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[38] One of the textbooks prohibited from being taught in Arizona public schools, *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years* (1998), features a poem from Silko's novel, *Ceremony* (1977). Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*/La Frontera (1987) is also banned.

recommended while also "remembering that we expanded our boundaries by massacring tribes which blocked our way, that we broke the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and that we caused the death of a million Vietnamese out of sheer macho arrogance" (p. 32). For a person *or nation* who commits such acts, the options, according to Rorty, are "suicide, a life of bottomless self-disgust, and an attempt to live so as never to do such a thing again" (p. 33). Claiming to align himself with Dewey, he "recommends the third choice" (p. 33). Although the third choice is clearly preferable to the first and second, by itself it does nothing to heal the lasting humiliations our actions have caused. Addressing the continuing effects of past injustices is compatible not only with our own self-respect, but also with a proper recognition of the dignity and self-respect of oppressed and marginalized others.

Declaring that the United States will never again expand our boundaries by massacring tribes, to take up one of Rorty's examples, says nothing about our present-day duty to address the continuing effects of our past cruelty toward American Indian peoples, including high rates of poverty, alcoholism, and suicide. The treaties we broke with American Indian tribes remain broken, and the fact that they were broken by our ancestors and not us does not negate our present-day moral obligation to respect, insofar as possible, the treaties' original terms. Although it may not be possible to do full justice to American Indians or to return all the land that was illegitimately taken from them, we should deeply regret this situation and recognize a duty to make *some* restitution.

To be fair, I very much doubt that, had he lived to witness it, Rorty would have endorsed Arizona's ban on Ethnic Studies. But his arguments against cultural recognition and for national pride lend themselves to the conclusion that Ethnic Studies should not be taught in *public* schools charged with educating the young for effective citizenship. This is an unfortunate and

anti-democratic consequence of the melting-pot view of the United States he shares with cultural conservatives. The implicit aim of HB 2281 is to acculturate an oppressed minority population into a hegemonic view of the history of the U.S. that, if it acknowledges them at all, treats past injustices as though they have no present-day effects. It thus frustrates any attempt to advocate for justice for the living oppressed because it claims that the victims of slavery and genocide are all dead and gone. But this is precisely the claim Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* rejects. For Silko, the dead continue to haunt the Americas and "howl for justice" (Silko 1991, p. 723). They howl for justice not only for themselves, but also for the continuing forms of oppression the injustices suffered by the dead have engendered.

I have been arguing that, as citizens of a pluralistic democratic society, we should aim to break free from homogeneous social enclaves and find ways to relate to people who are different from ourselves. One way to do this, as Rorty recognizes, is to read lots of books that reflect many different perspectives (1989, pp. 80-1). Unfortunately, he views this as a merely private activity that has consequences only for our private projects of self-creation. By contrast, Tucson's Ethnic Studies program and Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* (which, significantly, is narrated from multiple points of view) reflect an understanding that—in the context of a nation whose history (which has shaped its present) includes deeply racist, sexist, and homophobic policies—familiarizing ourselves with a variety of socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and gendered perspectives inevitably has political implications.

Although Rorty explicitly denies that his ideal of the plural self has any political utility, I have argued that if we replace Rorty's private/public distinction with a private-public continuum and replace his ironism with ambivalence, the social democratic[39] potential of the plural self

[39] Here I am using the term "social democratic" in the Deweyan sense of a culture of openness to others and a sense of community that is inclusive of difference.

comes into view. This conception of the plural self brings together the strengths of Dewey's and Rorty's views of the self while avoiding their respective anti-democratic implications. By developing bonds to multiple and conflicting group-specific identities, an ambivalent democratic citizen/self can achieve both personal and social growth by critically engaging a plurality of perspectives, thus forging meaningful and potentially transformative connections with oppositionally situated groups.

This chapter has compared the Deweyan ideal of growth-as-self-unification discussed in chapter one with Rorty's conception of growth-as-self-enlargement. Further, Anzaldúa's concept of the new *mestiza* has helped us see that we can bring together Rorty's tolerance for ambivalence with Dewey's emphasis on the inherently social and political nature of the self. The multiplicitous view of the self which thus emerges conceives of growth as a process of internalizing previously unfamiliar and heterogeneous vocabularies for both self-enrichment and engaged citizenship. This is a self that does not insist on unifying or harmonizing all differences into a more coherent whole. Rather, it is a self that recognizes some tensions and conflicts may be ineliminable, but which seeks to make use of its own internal divisions in order to multiply its possibilities for transformative cross-cultural interactions aimed at building solidarit*ies* across difference.

CHAPTER III

CHERYL MISAK, ROBERT TALISSE, AND THE ALLEGED "FAREWELL" TO DEWEYAN DEMOCRACY

This chapter defends the broadly Deweyan ideal of democratic citizenship I have articulated against Robert Talisse's recent claim to have given "decisive" reasons "to bid farewell to Deweyan democracy" (Talisse 2011, p. 516). He argues that pragmatist political theorists should exchange the dominant Deweyan paradigm for a narrowly epistemic, Peircean, form of perfectionism, which would charge the state with promoting cognitive virtues needed for deliberation aimed at truth. Building on Cheryl Misak's work on pragmatist democratic theory—inspired by Charles Sanders Peirce's "The Fixation of Belief"—Talisse contends that only a doctrine resting on purely epistemic norms everyone already implicitly accepts can both respect pluralism and commit us all to democracy. By contrast, Deweyan democracy is founded on an ideal of human flourishing or "growth" and therefore, argues Talisse, constitutes a reasonably rejectable form of *moral* perfectionism which does not respect what John Rawls has termed "the fact of reasonable[40] pluralism" (1993, p. xvii). The vision of democracy and democratic citizenship I urge, however, takes seriously John Dewey's claim that "democracy is a *personal* way of individual life" (*LW* 14, p. 226; emphasis original). I argue, therefore, that Deweyan democracy does not entail the top-down perfectionism Talisse suggests it does, which would permit the state to coercively impose a moral value (namely, "growth") on its citizens.

Although much of Talisse's critique results from what I argue is a misreading of Dewey

[40] The concept of reasonableness plays a central—and controversial—role in Rawls's political liberalism. For Rawls, reasonable persons "are not moved by the general good as such but desire for its own sake a social world in which they, as free and equal, can cooperate on terms all can accept" (1993, p. 50). A society exemplifies reasonable pluralism, then, when it contains a "diversity of comprehensive doctrines, all perfectly reasonable" (fn., p. 24).

as an advocate of perfectionist politics, I share his more general worry that Dewey's conception of the ideal of growth ultimately is incompatible with a pluralistic democracy. However, the reason it is incompatible with pluralism is not, as Talisse claims, just that growth is a rejectable moral ideal, but rather that Dewey's particular notion of growth as the progressive unification of differences tempts us to exclude or marginalize individuals and groups who cannot be harmonized with the hegemonic majority. This is the problem that has motivated my own critical reconstruction of Dewey's conception of growth, which embraces—rather than seeks always to overcome—multiplicity. Specifically, I have argued for an ideal of the growing self who, by cultivating bonds to multiple and conflicting group-specific identities, promotes both personal development and social progress. This image of the citizen/self is one that does not insist on unifying or harmonizing all differences into an ever more coherent whole. Instead, it departs from Dewey in acknowledging that some tensions and conflicts may be ineliminable (or, at least, ineliminable without relying on the sort of unjust coercive force Dewey repudiates).

By recognizing the divided self as a democratic resource rather than a mere problem, the possibilities for transformative cross-cultural interactions aimed at building solidarit*ies* across difference are multiplied. My reconstructed conception of growth better accommodates the continuing inter- and intra-personal conflicts that are inevitable features of a pluralistic society, thus better positioning us to realize Dewey's vision of democracy as a moral ideal, a way of life characterized by culturally disparate citizens cooperatively shaping a shared future. As such, the version of Deweyan democracy I have articulated is sufficiently sensitive to deep and persistent differences between citizens and thus survives Talisse's critique. Further, I argue that, unlike Deweyan democracy (including my reconstructed version of it), Misak's and Talisse's epistemic perfectionisms offer insufficient motivation to unite us behind the ameliorative projects

necessary to achieve and sustain a thriving democracy.

1 Talisse's Critique of Dewey

Before turning to Misak's and Talisse's positive views, which Talisse presents as the pragmatist alternative to Deweyan democracy, let us first consider Talisse's objections to Dewey. In his 2007 book, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Democracy*, and in subsequent articles, Talisse has argued that, in the light of insights drawn from John Rawls's later writings, pragmatists working on democratic theory must "bid farewell to Deweyan democracy."

Talisse begins from the premise that the legitimacy of a democratic state rests on the consent of the governed. Since, as Rawls notes, different citizens hold competing but nonetheless reasonable "moral comprehensive doctrines," no single comprehensive doctrine can win universal consent as a basis for political authority (Rawls 1993, p. 24). Deweyan democracy, on Talisse's view, is a moral comprehensive doctrine that would allow states to enact legislation and design institutions in order to foster the values and attitudes necessary for growth, values and attitudes Talisse claims citizens could reasonably reject (Talisse 2011, p. 510). If this argument is correct, Deweyan democracy violates the democratic principle of legitimacy. As I will argue, however, the suggestion that Dewey advocated coercing citizens to accept his ideal of growth ignores his insistence that democratic ends can only be achieved by democratic means and that the impetus for growth must spring from each individual. Talisse's characterization of Deweyan democracy as a form of perfectionism that provides a single criterion that is, by itself, sufficient to justify the creation of coercive laws and institutions elides the possibility of reading Dewey as providing, most fundamentally, a personal ideal aimed at enhancing democracy through conscientious engagement across difference.

1.1 Rawls, Reasonable Pluralism, and Oppression

In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls famously observes that "the diversity of reasonable comprehensive religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines found in modern democratic societies is not a mere historical condition that may soon pass away; it is a permanent feature of the public culture of democracy" (1993, p. 36). The coexistence of different groups of citizens (each drawing on its own traditions) affirming incompatible worldviews is "not simply the upshot of self- and class interests," but rather reflects "the work of free practical reason within the framework of free institutions" (Rawls 1993, p. 37).

We cannot expect even our most conscientious attempts to reason with each other to lead to consensus because of what Rawls terms the "burdens of judgment." These "sources, or causes, of disagreement between reasonable persons" include: the difficulty in assessing complex evidence, disagreement on how to weigh the evidence we do agree on, the vagueness of our moral and political concepts, and (significantly) the differences in the background experience we bring to bear on our evaluations of moral and political issues (Rawls 1993, pp. 55-7). Because of the fact of reasonable pluralism and the burdens of judgment, Rawls claims that "a continuing shared understanding on one comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrine can be maintained only by oppressive use of state power" (p. 37). Dewey's theory of democracy, according to Talisse, is a comprehensive moral doctrine that, ipso facto, is "inconsistent with reasonable pluralism and is thus oppressive in Rawls' sense" (2011, p. 509).[41]

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[41] Invoking "the core democratic idea that legitimacy of the democratic state rests upon the consent of the governed" (2009, p. 15), Talisse maintains that Deweyan democracy is "oppressive because it allows the coercion of reasonable citizens in the service of a comprehensive moral, philosophical or religious ideal that they could reasonably reject" (2011, p. 513). He further claims that "Deweyans hold that to show that some public policy P is the best among available options for promoting growth is to provide a conclusive reason for enacting P" (2011, p. 514).

To his credit, Talisse eschews the sort of narrowly epistemic interpretations of Deweyan democracy I criticized in chapter one, recognizing that it is fundamentally a way of life oriented toward the moral ideal of growth. Further, he rightly sees Dewey's conception of democracy as bound up with his philosophical views on the nature of the self, the interrelatedness of the individual and the community, and human flourishing. Talisse characterizes Dewey's theory of democracy in terms of four interconnected theses:

1. *The Continuity Thesis*: The democratic political order is a moral order characterized by a distinctive conception of human flourishing [namely, "growth"].
2. *The Transformative Thesis*: The democratic process is one in which individual preferences, attitudes and opinions are informed and transformed rather than simply aggregated.
3. *The Way of Life Thesis*: Democracy is not simply a kind of state or a mode of government, but a way of life.
4. *The Perfectionist Thesis*: Democratic states may enact legislation and design institutions for the expressed purpose of fostering the values and attitudes necessary for human flourishing. (2011, p. 510)

On my interpretation, Dewey holds the first three theses but not the last. Talisse's claim that Deweyan democrats, as such, are committed to *The Perfectionist Thesis* is false. Upon reading Dewey through a Rawlsian lens, Talisse wrongly dismisses his theory of democracy as a reasonably rejectable form of perfectionist politics that is not publicly justifiable as a basis for political authority. As I shall argue, however, Dewey did not claim to be providing such a basis.

1.2 Farewell to Deweyan Democracy?

As a prelude to my own response, it will be instructive to examine two unsatisfactory replies on behalf of the Deweyan democrat Talisse briefly considers but ultimately rejects. One he considers is Elizabeth Anderson's (re)vision of Deweyan democracy. According to Anderson, Dewey "characterized democracy as the use of social intelligence to solve problems of practical interest" (Anderson 2006, p. 13). We need not concern ourselves here with the details of how Anderson fleshes out her picture of "Deweyan" democracy. Suffice it to say (as I did in chapter one) that while she captures an aspect of Dewey's view, her epistemological focus obscures his fundamentally moral understanding of democracy. Talisse rightly observes that Anderson's vision of Deweyan democracy is not distinctively *Deweyan*, as she "makes no reference to Dewey's views regarding socially emergent selves, growth and human flourishing, the Great Community," or "democratic participation as a necessary condition of freedom" (2011, p. 518).[42]

Another response Talisse considers is that because the pragmatist commitment to fallibilism entails accepting that Dewey's "conception of flourishing is but one reasonable view among many," Deweyans might "see the aspiration for growth as a *personal* project, not something to be woven into the fabric of society" (Talisse 2011, p. 515). In other words, Deweyans should embrace Rorty's suggestion that we privatize our projects of self-creation. But, as Talisse notes, a Deweyan ultimately cannot privatize her aspiration for growth while remaining Deweyan, for doing so "would import into Deweyan democracy the public/private distinction of traditional liberalism" (Talisse 2011, p. 515). And, as I argued in chapter two, the rejection of the dichotomy between the private and the public is crucial to Dewey's social

[42] Although I agree that the social self, growth, the Great Community, and the importance of democratic participation are key features of Deweyan democracy, Talisse also lists the "need for government to create democratic individuals" (2011, p. 518). Dewey, however, certainly does not think there is such a need (as I will argue).

democracy, as well as to his interrelated conceptions of personal and social growth. A possibility Talisse fails to consider, however, is that we may accept the fallibility of Dewey's theory of growth, see the aspiration for growth as a personal project (though never merely a personal project), and also advocate for it to be woven into the fabric of society, experimentally, *alongside other reasonable views* (as in a tapestry).

Talisse takes the failures of Anderson's and Rorty's interpretations of Dewey to show that Deweyans cannot give up being oppressive without also giving up being Deweyan. However, his concern that Deweyans would disregard other citizens' reasonable objections and allow the state to coercively legislate and institutionalize Dewey's particular conception of growth presupposes a sharp separation between democratic states and their citizens—a separation Dewey explicitly rejects.[43] For Dewey, the work of democracy begins not with government action but with face-to-face discussion between citizens. He writes that the "heart" of democracy is "in free gatherings of neighbors on the street corner" and "in gatherings of friends in the living rooms of houses and apartments" (*LW* 14, p. 227).

The idea that growth could be foisted on citizens by the government without their consent ignores Dewey's insistence that democratic ends can only be achieved by democratic means. "If there is one conclusion to which human experience unmistakenly points," he writes, "it is that democratic ends demand democratic methods for their realization" (*LW* 13, p. 187). And yet, Talisse claims Dewey is committed to the view that political institutions should promote his particular conception of human flourishing (2011, p. 510). This is "clear," he says, because

[43] "Somewhere between associations that are narrow, close and intimate and those which are so remote as to have only infrequent and casual contact lies, then, the province of a state. We do not find and should not find sharp and fast demarcations.... The waivering and shifting line of distinction between a state and other forms of social union is, again, an obstacle in the way of theories of the state which imply as their concrete counterpart something as sharply marked off as the concept." (Dewey *LW* 2, pp. 262-3).

Dewey "holds that political institutions 'are not means for obtaining something for individuals. They are means of *creating* individuals' (MW12: 191, emphasis in original)" (2011, p. 511). But Dewey does not hold this of "political institutions" in particular; rather, he holds this of "social arrangements" more broadly, including families, schools, and neighborhoods (Dewey *MW* 12, p. 191). More importantly, in the quoted passage Dewey is not *prescribing* that social arrangements or political institutions should aim to create individuals; rather, he is *describing* what they inevitably do, given the social nature of the self.

It is true that Deweyan democracy would allow states to enact legislation and design institutions for the purpose of fostering growth, *assuming such measures enjoyed popular support*. However, Dewey observes,

> Majority rule ... never is merely majority rule. As a practical politician, Samuel J. Tilden, said a long time ago: 'The means by which a majority comes to be a majority is the more important thing': antecedent debates, modification of views to meet the opinions of minorities, the relative satisfaction given the latter by the fact that it has had a chance and that next time it may be successful in becoming a majority. (Dewey *LW* 2, p. 364)

Deweyan democracy views growth as the standard by which to measure all social and political institutions. But a law or policy designed to promote growth yet which faces deep and sincere objections from a minority likely would create resentment, thereby calcifying divisions between groups and forestall rather than foster growth. Dewey emphasized that "only the *voluntary* initiative and *voluntary* cooperation of individuals can produce social institutions that will protect the liberties necessary for achieving development of genuine individuality" (*LW* 14, pp. 91-2; emphasis added). The Deweyan democrat will not—indeed cannot—*force* growth on anyone, and thus will utilize political force cautiously.

For Dewey, democracy "holds that the spirit of individuality indwells in every individual and that the choice to develop it must proceed from the individual" (*EW* 1, p. 244). At most, then, the government can create conditions that give individuals and groups the *opportunity* to grow and flourish. Nobody would be required to accept Dewey's philosophical positions (though I would argue that, with the noted exception of his twin ideals of self-cohesion and social-unification, many of his views are conducive to effective citizenship). As Dewey remarks, "democratic *institutions* are no guarantee for the existence of democratic individuals" but rather "individuals who prize their own liberties and who prize the liberties of other individuals, are the sole final warrant for the existence and endurance of democratic institutions" (*LW* 14, p. 92; emphasis original).

Finally, to further demonstrate the falsity of Talisse's characterization of Deweyan democracy as form of moral perfectionism, let us briefly consider two claims he makes about moral perfectionists. First, Talisse says that moral perfectionists "advocate a politics of communal values and traditional ways of life" that tend toward "self-insulation" (2007b, p. 399). However, Dewey does not advocate an insular politics of communal values. As I explained in chapter one, for Dewey, continued growth requires plasticity of both individuals and groups, who must be flexible and open enough with each other to allow for productive and mutually transforming interactions. A self-insulated community will stagnate and be unable to adapt to changing social conditions and therefore cannot flourish.

Second, Talisse claims that moral perfectionists reject individual rights against the state. As I also explained in chapter one, however, though Dewey rejects the Lockean notion of natural rights, he recognizes that socially constructed individual rights are nonetheless real (Dewey *MW* 5, p. 394). For Dewey, rights are not God-given or inscribed within some human essence; rather,

they are adaptable tools necessary for ensuring the effective use of our positive freedoms, and are therefore constitutive of the commitment to fostering personal and social growth. Thus, contrary to Talisse's claim, Deweyan democracy provides important resources for individuals to resist oppressive state power.

I have argued that Talisse's critique of Deweyan democracy misses its mark. Pace Talisse, the Deweyan democrat, for both moral and pragmatic reasons, will be loath to seize coercive political force as a means to the end of growth. Ultimately Dewey recognizes that the democratic habits and attitudes of individuals are the best and most effective engine of social and political transformation. "Instead of thinking of our own dispositions and habits as accommodated to certain institutions," he writes, "we have to learn to think of the latter as expressions, projections and extensions of habitually dominant personal attitudes" (*LW* 14, p. 226). Thus understood, Deweyan democracy cannot be regarded as a coercive form of perfectionist politics. Nor does Deweyan democracy constitute an insular politics of communal values or a rejection of individual rights.

As I argued in chapter one, however, Dewey's understanding of the ideal of growth as a process of unifying or harmonizing differences cuts against the pluralistic spirit underlying his vision of democracy and democratic citizenship. In just this way Dewey "mistakes the kind of unity a constitutional regime is capable of without violating its most basic democratic principles" (Rawls 1993, p. 42). Although Dewey recognizes pluralism as a necessary condition for human flourishing, his notion of growth does not fully take into account how the burdens of judgment—especially the differences in our race-, gender-, and class-inflected background experiences—can thwart the process of attaining a coherent unity from diversity. Indeed, this is the very problem to which my reconstruction of Dewey's conception of growth has been addressed. Talisse

mistakenly thinks a conception of democracy rooted in *any* moral ideal of human flourishing or growth would be objectionably coercive and thus would fail to respect the fact of reasonable pluralism. I have argued, by contrast, for a reconstruction of Dewey's conception of growth that not only accommodates multiplicity, both within the self and within the community, but that also recognizes the plural self as a resource for democratic politics in the context of an indissolubly pluralistic society. In the concluding chapter, I shall return once more to the issue of how my reconstructed conception of growth better accommodates pluralism. But now let us turn to the positive view of democracy Talisse endorses so we can see more clearly how it contrasts with the broadly Deweyan approach to democratic theory I have defended.

2 Misak's Politics of Truth

Because Talisse builds on Cheryl Misak's work on Charles Sanders Peirce's epistemology and its relevance for democratic theory, it will be helpful to lay the groundwork for our discussion of his positive view with a brief explication and critique of Misak's argument for democracy—which historian of pragmatism Robert Westbrook describes as "the strongest argument yet offered for claiming a democratic political valence for pragmatism" (2005, p. 51). Whereas Dewey advances a fundamentally *moral* conception of democracy as constitutive of personal and social growth, Misak offers what she and Talisse take to be a purely epistemic conception of and justification for democracy. As we shall see, however, she ultimately finds herself appealing to a distinctly moral notion of equality. Once we have gained an understanding of Misak's view and its shortcomings, we will be well positioned to critically evaluate Talisse's development of her "Peircean" democracy, which goes further than Misak in explicitly rejecting

appeals to moral ideals.[44]

2.1 Peircean Democracy?

In her book, *Truth, Politics, Morality*, and in subsequent articles, Misak has argued that pragmatism's "view of politics is at its heart epistemic" (2008, p. 94). She claims that, with the "glaring exception" of Richard Rorty, all pragmatists "hold that morals and politics, like science, aim at the truth or at getting things right and that the best method for achieving this aim is a method they sometimes call the scientific method or the method of intelligence" (p. 94). Further, Misak tells us that pragmatist epistemology entails a form of deliberative democracy. On this view, the reason we should accept as legitimate political decisions resulting from open debate and discussion is that "the deliberative democratic method is more likely to give us true or right or justified answers to our questions" (Misak 2008a, p. 95).[45]

Ironically, Misak traces the origin of her pragmatist political theory not to Dewey, the classical pragmatist most associated with democracy, but to Peirce, who describes himself not only as an "opponent of female suffrage and universal suffrage," but also as a "disbeliever in democracy" (Peirce 1908, p. 78). Despite his anti-democratic personal beliefs, however, Misak locates in Peirce's epistemology an *implicit* argument for deliberative democracy. Specifically, she points to his account of truth, which she glosses by saying "a true belief would be the best belief, were we to inquire as far as we could on the matter" (2000, p. 49). She is careful to distinguish Peirce's considered view of truth from the way he sometimes expressed it, as what is

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[44] Unlike Talisse, Misak sees her own project as continuous with rather than a rejection of Deweyan democracy. Although she chooses to draw on Peirce rather than Dewey, on the final page of her book, *Truth, Politics, Morality*, she specifically aligns herself with Dewey's view of "morality and politics as problem driven" (2000, p. 156).

[45] Note the slippage from "true" to "justified," a slippage that puts Misak much closer to Rorty (who agrees that our inquiries aim at justification but denies that they can aim at truth) than she admits.

"fated to ultimately be agreed to" at the end of inquiry (1878, p. 63).[46] This formulation is problematic because we do not know what it would be like to reach the end of inquiry.[47] Further, Peirce's "end of inquiry" view is often taken as a "definition" of truth, rather than a "pragmatic elucidation" (Misak 2000, p. 58). As Talisse puts it, the apparent problem with truth being *defined* as what would be agreed upon at the end of inquiry is that it "puts the cart before the horse" (Talisse 2009a, p. 93). It is not that converging on a belief *makes* it true; rather, according to Misak and Talisse, the best shared reasons and evidence point to a belief *because* it is true.[48]

Instead of offering an analytic definition of truth, Misak's Peirce elucidates the pragmatic consequences of holding a true belief—namely, such a belief "would withstand doubt, were we to inquire as far as we fruitfully could on the matter" (2000, p. 49). According to Misak, given pragmatism's attention to experience and commitment to fallibilism, this "low-profile" conception of truth requires inquirers not only to accept the defeasibility of their current beliefs, but also "to seek out potentially conflicting experience if their beliefs are going to be properly aimed at truth" (p. 96).

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[46] Misak also is careful to distinguish Peirce's view from William James's claim that the "best" belief is the most "expedient" belief (see James 1907, p. 98).

[47] Misak sides with Rorty in rejecting the notion that truth is what would be agreed upon at the ideal end of inquiry. Rorty argues that "there can be no such thing as an 'ideal audience' before whom justification would be sufficient to ensure truth, any more than there can be a largest integer" (Rorty 1995, p. 283). Misak echoes this point, noting that "an inquirer could never know when inquiry had been pushed far enough for a genuinely stable option to have been reached" (Misak 2000, p. 58). So instead of expressing her "Peircean" view of truth in terms of the end of inquiry, Misak says "a true belief is one upon which inquiry could not improve, a belief which would fit with experience and argument and would satisfy all of the aims of inquiry, no matter how much the issue was subject to experiment, evaluation, and debate" (2000, p. 58). It is far from obvious, however, that any amount of investigation could ever satisfy *all* our aims of inquiry, which, according to Misak, include "empirical adequacy, coherence with other beliefs, simplicity, explanatory power, getting a reliable guide to action, fruitfulness for other research, greater understanding of others, increased maturity, and the like" (2013, p. 37).

[48] Cf. Rorty, who writes, "pragmatists, at least those of my sect, do not think that anything—either the physical world or the consensus of inquirers—*makes* beliefs true. We have as little use for the notion of 'what makes a true sentence true' as we do for that of 'what a true sentence corresponds to.' On our view, all consensus does is help us *recognize* moral truths" (2007, p. 923; emphasis original).

Further, Misak's Peircean conception of truth implies that there is no essential difference between scientific inquiry and inquiry into moral or political matters. Whereas non-cognitivists like A. J. Ayer (1936) and C. L. Stevenson (1944) famously claim that moral and political assertions are not truth apt because they merely express our subjective preferences rather than refer to objects in the world (as scientific assertions do),[49] Misak argues that our actual practices of moral and political inquiry are parasitic on the concept of truth:

> In morals and politics, we distinguish between thinking we are right and being right, we criticize the beliefs and actions of others, and we think that we can improve our judgments and learn from our mistakes. These distinctions and practices are quite literally dependent on the notion of truth—we can make sense of them only by supposing that we aim at something that goes beyond what you or I or any group of people happen to think. (p. 97)

Misak takes our moral and political beliefs, like our scientific beliefs, to aim at truth. Further, she claims that holding or asserting *any* beliefs, whether moral, political, or scientific, obligates us "to keep those beliefs and assertions responsive to or answerable to reasons and experience" (p. 97). She says this is a *constitutive norm* of belief.

Arguably, Misak deviates from Peirce on the question of whether merely holding a belief *obligates* us to enter into inquiry with people who disagree with us. As a matter of descriptive psychology, Peirce understands belief as "a calm and satisfied state which we do not wish to avoid, or to change to a belief in anything else" (1877, p. 41). He adds that "we cling tenaciously, not merely to believing, but to believing just what we do believe" (p. 41). Of course, Peirce is critical of what he terms the "method of tenacity"—the method of fixing our beliefs by

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[49] The non-cognitivist presupposes a correspondence theory of truth according to which only statements corresponding to facts about physical objects are truth apt.

insolating ourselves "from all influences" (1877, p. 47); however, there is a wide gap between Peirce's admonition against hermetically insulating ourselves from experiences that may conflict with our beliefs and the claim that we have a positive epistemic duty always to seek them out.[50]

Peirce also seems to have denied that truth is an aim of inquiry. For Peirce, "the sole object of inquiry is the settlement of opinion" (1877, p. 42). Against those, such as Misak, who claim that we "seek not merely an opinion, but a true opinion," he observes that "as soon as a firm belief is reached we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief be true or false" (p. 42).[51] For Misak, though, our beliefs aim at truth, and thus merely in virtue of holding a belief we are obligated to enter into the social practices of "inquiry, reason-giving, and deliberation" (p. 99). And since, on Misak's view, these activities require background institutions associated with democracy (especially institutions that support the freedoms of speech and assembly), having beliefs supposedly commits us to democracy.

2.2 Misak versus Rorty: Is Truth an Aim of Inquiry?

To better understand Misak's notion of truth and its role in her political philosophy, it will be instructive to place it in conversation with the critique of theories of truth put forward by Richard Rorty, whom Talisse and Misak often use as a foil for their own views. As we saw in the previous chapter, Rorty follows Dewey in denying that truth is an aim of inquiry. Rorty and Dewey share Rawls's concern that appealing to the authority of truth rather than to free

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[50] As Eric MacGilvray explains, "on Peircean grounds the mere assertion of a belief does not commit one to further inquiry on its behalf, because belief is, as Peirce puts it, 'thought at rest.' The origins of inquiry lie for Peirce not in belief but its opposite, doubt, and doubt follows not from habit but from the privation of habit. As long as our habits, our rules of action, reliably serve our purposes, as long as 'the premises are not in fact doubted,' then we need not and will not conduct further inquiry on their behalf. To hold otherwise is to put the pragmatic cart before the horse" (2014, p. 113).

[51] Just as we can never know when we have reached the ideal end of inquiry, we can never know whether more inquiry would improve upon any given belief. "The most that can be maintained is," according to Peirce, "that we seek for a belief that we shall *think* to be true" (p. 42).

agreement is contrary to the spirit of a pluralistic democracy (see Rorty 2009, p. 257; Dewey *LW* 4, p. 221; Rawls 1993, p. 43). I argue that Rorty reveals a dilemma faced by anyone who claims, as Misak and Talisse do, that all inquiry aims at truth: either truth is not a distinct aim of inquiry over and above the aim of justifying ourselves to others (in which case it cannot play the unique and decisive role Misak or Talisse assign to it in their theories of democracy), or the quest for truth is implicitly authoritarian and thus antidemocratic. We shall see that Misak falls on the first horn of the dilemma and, as a result of the direction in which he takes Misak's view, Talisse falls on the second horn.

For now, let us focus on Misak's view that truth is an aim of inquiry over and above the aim of justification. She contrasts her position with Rorty's, which seeks to replace appeals to truth with ethnocentric appeals to the justificatory standards of "our" community. According to Misak, Rorty's view amounts to a form of relativism that "leaves us with no way of adjudicating claims that arise in different communities" (Misak 2008a, p. 100). She is aware of Rorty's reply that we can—indeed *must*, given our socialization—adjudicate between claims with reference to the standards of our own community. But she contends that this response is dangerous insofar as it leaves us unable to answer challenges by anti-democrats like the fascist legal philosopher Carl Schmitt (her favorite example), who, as Misak tells us, urged the attainment of "substantive hegemony" by any means necessary, including the genocidal "elimination of those who disagree with us" (2008a, p. 100). According to Misak, if we cannot appeal to a "universal conception of truth" (2000, p. 12) in our moral and political debates, we are left defenseless against "the Schmittian worldview" (2008a, p. 101).

Misak wrongly takes Rorty to hold that "a true belief is one which we find good to believe at the moment" (Misak 2000, p. 13). This is not Rorty's considered view. Although

Misak generously applies the principle of charity in her interpretation of Peirce (see Misak 2000, p. 48), she, like all-too-many of Rorty's critics, tends to focus on the most incautious expressions of his ideas.[52] In his more circumspect moments, Rorty makes clear that he is not proposing a definition of "true," but rather, like Peirce, is offering an elucidation of the word. Rorty observes that "true" does not have a univocal meaning. One common use of the word is to endorse a belief as justified; however, "true" can also be used to caution that even a perfectly justified belief may turn out to be false (Rorty 1986, p. 154). Misak claims that Rorty conflates truth with mere justification; however, he plainly recognizes that, in addition to its endorsing use (e.g., "It's true. Smoking causes cancer."), "true" also has a cautioning use (e.g., "The evidence points to guilt, but is it true she committed the crime?").[53] What Rorty denies is that "true" has an *explaining* use, a way of accounting for the utility of true beliefs by specifying a relationship between them and the non-human world (pp. 152-3). No such explanation is forthcoming since, as Misak agrees, it is impossible "to get outside of our own minds and see the world as it really is" (Misak 2000, p. 12).[54]

Because Misak wrongly takes Rorty to reject the cautioning use of "true," her criticisms

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[52] Misak points to Rorty's infamous quip that truth is whatever our peers let us get away with saying (Misak 2013, p. 230; Rorty 1979, p. 176) but fails to notice his acknowledgement that such definitions of truth "always fall victim, sooner or later, to the argument that a given belief might meet any specifiable conditions, but still not be true" (Rorty 1995, p 282). Indeed, Rorty denies that we need a definition or theory of truth at all, much less a pragmatist theory of truth (Rorty 1986, p. 153).

[53] Rorty also notes that the word "true" can be used disquotationally, "to say metalinguistic things of the form 'S' is true iff –" (1986, p. 154).

[54] Interestingly, Peirce thought he could *explain* truth "by nothing human, but by some external permanency" (1877, p. 46). "There are Real things," he claims, "whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those Reals affect our senses according to regular laws, and, though our sensations are as different as our relations to the object, yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really and truly are; and any man, if he have sufficient experience and reason enough about it, will be led to the one True conclusion" (p. 46). Note that, pace Misak's Peirce, this account of inquiry into truth appears to be incompatible with moral or political inquiry.

of his view of truth miss their mark.[55] It is false that, on Rorty's considered view, the notion of truth should "simply drop out of our vocabulary" (Misak 2000, p. 18).[56] If there is a deep disagreement between Misak and Rorty about truth, it comes down to whether there is something philosophically interesting or important to say about the cautioning use of "true." For Rorty, "the entire force of the cautionary use of 'true' is to point out that justification is relative to an audience, and that we can never exclude the possibility that some better audience might exist, or come to exist, to which a belief which is justifiable to us would not be justifiable" (1995, p. 283). By contrast, Misak claims to offer a philosophically substantive conception of truth that can serve to guide our inquiries (2000, p. 14). Once she fills in the details, however, it is not clear that her conception of truth is so different from Rorty's.

In the last analysis, Misak fails to answer Rorty's basic critique of the view that truth is an aim of inquiry—namely, that there is no norm for seeking truth other than our local and historically contingent norms of justifying beliefs (see Rorty 1995, p. 281).[57] She suggests that if

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[55] In her most recent book, Misak concedes that, in his "less revolutionary moods" (2013, p. 235), Rorty recognizes the cautioning use of the word "true." However, she thinks there is a tension between the cautioning and endorsing uses of "true," since they "require us to think, in one thought, that *p* is true, but it might be shown to be false" (p. 236). To my ears, this just sounds like an expression of the fallibilism common to all pragmatists. Indeed, in articulating the Peircean view of truth she subscribes to in the very next paragraph, Misak writes,

> Someone who asserts *p* needs to predict that her assertion would stand up to the evidence and argument now and to subsequent evidence and argument. If that assumption is defeated in the future, then ... the belief in fact is false. A believer both accepts this possibility and bets that it will not come about. (p. 236)

I do not see any meaningful difference between the Rortyan idea that we can endorse a belief as true while acknowledging that it may be shown to be false and the Peircean idea that we bet on our belief being true while acknowledging the possibility that it may be defeated in the future.

[56] Rorty does urge philosophers to give up *theorizing* truth—for, as he notes, "terms used to commend or caution, terms such as 'good!', 'right!', 'true!', 'false!', 'way to go!' and 'watch it!', do not need much philosophical definition or explication" (Rorty 1995, p. 283). But that is not the same thing as suggesting the word should drop out of *use*.

[57] In a section of *Truth, Politics, Morality* titled "The role of truth in inquiry," Misak claims that truth is internally related to inquiry because when I assert "*p*" I assert "*p* is true" and thus "undertake

we did not take truth to be our goal, inquiry would be pointless.[58] She claims that we can make sense of our deliberative practices "only by supposing that we aim at the truth" (2009, p. 31). Rorty and Dewey would respond by invoking the pragmatic maxim, asking: What is the difference that makes a difference between aiming at justification and aiming at truth? Whenever Misak claims to be telling us how to aim at truth, she only tells us how to justify our beliefs to others in our community of inquiry, by being "responsive to or answerable to reasons and evidence" (p. 31).

2.3 Substituting Justification for Truth

I have been arguing that Misak's insistence that inquiry aims at truth is misguided. Despite her claims to the contrary, her view of truth is not much different from Rorty's or, by extension, Dewey's. Misak thus falls on the first horn of the dilemma mentioned above: truth is not a distinct aim of inquiry over and above the aim of justifying ourselves to others. Consequently, truth cannot play the distinctive role she assigns to it in her theory of democracy. Sounding more Rortyan than she would acknowledge, Misak has recently remarked that truth "is not linked to the actual products of human inquiry" (2008b, p. 114). Rather, she says, truth is linked "to the products of human inquiry, *were they to be the best they could be*" (p. 114; emphasis added). The whole purpose of this counterfactual formulation of truth is to create

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commitments regarding inquiry, reasons, and evidence" (2000, p. 73). Specifically, my belief that *p* commits me to accepting the practical and inferential consequences of *p*, defending and arguing for *p*, and giving up my belief in *p* if enough reasons and evidence speak against it (p. 73-4). But Misak does not distinguish these from the commitments she takes herself to assume when she asserts her belief that *p* is justified (as opposed to true).

[58] Perhaps Misak worries that if truth were not our aim in inquiry, we would lack the necessary motivation for entering into the social practice of reason exchange. To this sort of concern Rorty has a ready reply. He simply denies that we need any such motivation. Here he appeals to the Peircean (and Deweyan) view of beliefs as habits of action that are responsive to the pressures of our social and physical environment rather than as representations of a non-human reality. "Inquiry and justification," Rorty observes, "are activities we language-users cannot help engage in; we do not need a goal called 'truth' to help us do so, any more than our digestive organs need a goal called health to set them to work" (1999, p. 423).

"distance between what is justified now and what would really be justified" (p. 114). But Rorty has given us a simpler and more pragmatic way to understand the distinction between "justified now" and "true," one embedded in our actual practices of inquiry (as opposed to unsatisfiable counterfactual conditions). For Rorty, "*the* only *point in contrasting the true with the merely justified is to contrast a possible future with the actual present*" (1999, p. 424; emphasis original). That is, when we invoke the cautioning use of the word "true," we are contrasting our present beliefs with our own future beliefs, or with beliefs that would be justified for imagined future audiences. But we are not contrasting them with an ideal audience at the end of inquiry, because, again, we have no idea what that would be like.[59] The hope that our beliefs are true, including our moral and political beliefs, is just "the hope that we will look good to our future selves, and to future generations" (Rorty 2007, p. 927).

In spite of the rhetorical weight Misak places on her claim that our inquiries aim at truth, under scrutiny it collapses into Rorty's Deweyan claim that our inquiries aim at nothing more or less than justification or warranted assertability. The question remains, however, whether our epistemic justificatory norms are sufficient to ground a commitment to democracy. On the one hand, Misak argues that "the requirements of genuine belief show that we must, broadly speaking, be democratic inquirers" (2000, p. 106). She claims, further, that holding beliefs obligates us to expose ourselves "to different reasons, different perspectives, different arguments" (p. 106). Being believers, on this view, commits us to debate and deliberation; so only in a democracy, with its freedoms of speech and association, can our epistemic norms of belief and inquiry be satisfied (Misak 2009, p. 33). On the other hand, as I discuss below in

[59] Rorty explains that he was "persuaded of the untenability of the Peircianism [sic] view by Michael Williams' 'Coherence, Justification, and Truth' (Review of Metaphysics XXXIV (1980) pp. 243-72) in particular by his claim (p. 269) that 'we have no idea what it would be for a theory to be ideally complete and comprehensive ... or of what it would be for good inquiry to have an end'" (Rorty 1986, p. 156 fn.).

connection with Talisse's view, it turns out that, for Misak, what often motivates us to communicate across difference, in the last resort, is not our epistemic norms but rather the duty to treat others as *moral* equals (even when we cannot regard them as epistemic equals). Hence Misak concedes that "[w]hen I think that a person is deluded, in the grip of an incoherent or false ideology, or just not very wise, I shall only have the moral reason, *not the epistemic reason*, for paying attention" (2000, p. 125; emphasis added).

Ignoring this important qualification, Talisse takes up Misak's otherwise extraordinarily bold claim that merely holding beliefs (even anti-democratic beliefs!) commits us all to a particularly stringent set of epistemic norms which, because they supposedly require democratic institutions and practices for their realization, also commits us to a robust form of deliberative democracy. This, as we shall see, provides the linchpin for Talisse's epistemic perfectionism.

3 Talisse's Epistemic Perfectionism

Talisse interprets Misak's theory of democracy as a comprehensive doctrine that nonetheless respects the fact of reasonable pluralism. Misak's epistemic perfectionism "is comprehensive in the Rawlsian sense" because it "specifies 'what is of value in human life', it prescribes 'ideals' of 'personal character' and of 'associational relationships', and it contains 'much else that is to inform our conduct' (Rawls, 1996: 13)" (Talisse 2007b, p. 396; emphasis original). On Talisse's reading, Misak has provided "not simply a new *justification* of deliberative democracy," but a "new *conception* of deliberative democracy itself" (Talisse 2007a, p. 95; emphasis original), a conception that is perfectionist rather than neutral between competing values and ideals. Her view requires citizens to adopt a particular set of epistemic habits, including "a perpetual readiness to engage in the process of reason exchanging and argument," "a thoroughgoing openness to disagreement," and "a preparedness to revise one's

own view" (Talisse 2007b, p. 395). Talisse further observes that Misak's view of democratic citizenship "entails a political commitment on the part of individuals to a state that *promotes* this specific view of citizenship" (p. 396). As individuals we are vulnerable to error and self-delusion; therefore, the exercise of epistemic virtue requires a whole community devoted to proper inquiry, a community that "must be cultivated and *maintained* by social institutions" (p. 396; emphasis original).

Because Talisse endorses and builds on this conception of deliberative democracy, it seems he is prepared to grant the state enormous power in shaping each citizen's character, at least insofar as it relates to her epistemic values and habits. And yet, Talisse insists that, unlike Dewey's alleged *moral* perfectionism, Misak's *epistemic* perfectionism—and, by extension, his own—is not objectionably coercive. I have already shown that, in fact, Deweyan democracy is not a form of perfectionist politics. Now I will argue that Talisse's own version of epistemic perfectionism, grounded in what he terms "folk epistemology," is implicitly elitist and thus authoritarian and antidemocratic. That is, whereas I demonstrated earlier that Misak falls on the first horn of the above-mentioned dilemma (despite her claims to the contrary, truth is not an aim of inquiry distinct from justification), now I will argue that Talisse falls on the second horn.

3.1 Epistemic versus Moral Perfectionism

The key distinction Talisse draws between Dewey and Misak is the distinction between the moral and epistemic values that, respectively, underpin their conceptions of democracy. Liberal objections to perfectionism have focused on perfectionisms that threaten to promote some moral values at the expense of other sincerely held moral values. However, the perfectionism entailed by Misak's brand of deliberative democracy is, according to Talisse, narrowly *epistemic* and thus "consistent with a wide range of reasonable comprehensive moral

doctrines, perhaps the full range" (2009a, p. 148).

It would appear that a problem immediately arises for Talisse's argumentative strategy if we reject the dichotomy between moral and epistemic norms he seems to invoke. Arguably, epistemic normativity ultimately is grounded in moral normativity. Although this view is not uncontroversial, it should be especially attractive to pragmatists who recognize the entanglement of facts and values, beliefs and actions, and individual believers and communities of inquiry. As Stephen Grimm argues, because we are "information-dependent and information-sharing creatures, we naturally—and, it seems, rightfully—depend on others as sources of information," and therefore "epistemic normativity would seem to be explicable in terms of a deeper, and more obviously moral, sort of normativity: namely, the sort of normativity that derives from our obligation to help others carry out their projects and concerns" (2009, p. 262).[60] This view of epistemic normativity gives us reason to be suspicious of the claim that there is a firm distinction between epistemic perfectionism and moral perfectionism.

Talisse insists that his argument does not rely on a dichotomy between the epistemic and the moral, however. He reports being "quite sympathetic to the thought that all forms of normativity are of the same fabric" (2014b, p. 47). Instead of asserting a firm distinction between types of normativity, Talisse is better understood as claiming that, though the epistemic norms he and Misak appeal to may be a species of moral norm, they somehow are uniquely uncontroversial. If so, then his and Misak's epistemic(-cum-moral) perfectionism is not oppressive, as other forms of moral perfectionism are—including the sort of moral perfectionism Talisse (mis-)attributes to Dewey.

Recall Talisse's main challenge to moral perfectionism in general, and his perfectionist

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[60] Grimm's argument echoes Dewey's remark that truth is a "social virtue, meeting a demand growing out of intercourse, not a logical, much less an epistemological relation" (*MW* 6. p. 14).

interpretation of Deweyan democracy in particular: that moral perfectionism permits citizens to be coerced into serving ideals they could reasonably reject. By contrast, Talisse insists that Misak's perfectionism is not coercive because each citizen already implicitly accepts the ideals entailed by the Peircean epistemology on which it is grounded. That is, he denies there is a fact of reasonable pluralism with respect to our epistemic values and norms. Whether we conceive of epistemic perfectionism as a species of moral perfectionism or not, the crux of Talisse's argument rests on his claim that the epistemic norms he and Misak appeal to are thin enough to allow for universal assent yet substantive enough to entail a robust form of deliberative democracy. For Talisse and Misak, even an avowed anti-democrat like Carl Schmitt is, insofar as he has beliefs at all (including anti-democratic beliefs), implicitly committed to these epistemic norms, and thus to democracy.

3.2 Setting Rawls Aside

Perhaps surprisingly, in the light of his use of Rawls's reasonable rejectability test to criticize Deweyan democracy, Talisse's commitment to the epistemic virtue of perpetual openness to the free exchange of reasons motivates him to critique what he refers to as Rawls' "politics of omission" (Talisse 2006). Talisse cites Cass Sunstein's research on the phenomenon of group polarization that suggests restricting public discourse to the pre-approved terms set by public reason is likely to generate extremism and thus political instability—which, ironically, is precisely what Rawls designed public reason liberalism to avoid. According to Sunstein, "like-minded people, after discussions with their peers, tend to end up thinking a more extreme version of what they thought before they started to talk" (2003, p. 112). If Sunstein is right,[61] talking

[61] Using evidence from deliberative polling, Robert Luskin, James Fishkin, and Kyu Hahn have challelenged the extent to which "small groups" actually exhibit a general tendency toward polarization. Examining their data, they suggest there is "no pronounced tendency for opinions to homogenize within

only among themselves would tend to make conservatives more conservative while making liberals more liberal; and, presumably, it would make Peirceans more Peircean while making Deweyans more Deweyan.

Importantly, as Talisse points out, the effect of group polarization is further exacerbated within insulated groups whose views are excluded from discussions within the public sphere (2006, p. 113). These groups resent having their most central beliefs "relegated to the 'background culture' of society," especially when they take these beliefs to be "highly relevant to how society should be structured" (Talisse 2006, p. 113). As a result, members of excluded groups will insulate themselves within deliberative enclaves of like-minded individuals who "come to see themselves as excluded, victimized, and oppressed" while regarding those with opposing views not merely as wrong, but "as either evil or benighted" (Talisse 2006, p. 113). At best, the dynamics of group polarization further factionalize the body politic, rendering it more difficult to establish the social trust, mutual respect, and concern necessary to motivate a collective effort to address urgent social problems. At worst, a politics of omission begets fanaticism and, potentially, political violence. To neutralize the threat of instability and violence, then, Talisse rightly says democracy must eschew Rawls's public reason restriction and encourage robust public deliberation in which a wide variety of perspectives are represented (Talisse 2006, p. 114). And yet, Talisse appears to uphold the public reason requirement, if only as a way to forestall Deweyans from promoting their views about the nature of democracy and

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groups or polarize across them" (2007. p. 2). However, they acknowledge that homogenization and polarization "vary considerably from group to group" (p. 2). Luskin et al. concede to having limited success "in explaining the variation in polarization," but go on to claim that "homogenization appears to depend on the mode of deliberation and the extremity and diversity of the group's initial views" (p. 10). Elsewhere Fishkin writes, "The fact that our DPs [deliberative polls] do not confirm Sunstein's law of group polarization under the controlled conditions of balanced discussion with representative samples does not undermine the case Sunstein makes for polarization outside these special conditions" (2011, fn. p. 226).

the values conducive to effective citizenship.

If Talisse's use of Rawls seems puzzling given his own compelling argument that the public reason requirement would lead to group polarization and political instability, his use of Rawls is even more surprising in the light of his endorsement of Misak's "Peircean" conception of democracy, which is rooted in the idea that our beliefs aim at truth (and not unrejectability). The Rawlsian view that, due to the burdens of judgment, the free use of reason will lead to a proliferation of conflicting views is at odds with the Peircean view that, in the long run, the best reasons and argument will (or "would") converge on the truth.

Recall that, for Talisse, it does not matter whether the substantive claims of Deweyan democracy are true; all that matters is that a reasonable citizen could reject it.[62] As he puts the point, "public policy must be justifiable by reasons that meet a standard higher than truth; publicly justifying reasons must be not reasonably rejectable" (Talisse 2011, p. 513). On this view, public policy regarding even highly contentious matters such as abortion, for example, must be acceptable to all reasonable members of the public![63] However, neither Misak nor Talisse claim that being a believer entails holding my belief to be unrejectable, as this would block the path of inquiry—a cardinal sin for Peircean pragmatists. If I believe that (some version of) Deweyan democracy is true (as I do), then, for Peircean reasons, Talisse and Misak think that obligates me to articulate my reasons for believing it and defend it against objections. But Talisse

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[62] "The problem is not that Dewey's conception of flourishing is false. Rather, the problem is that the Deweyan democratic ideal can be reasonably rejected" (Talisse 2011, pp. 514-5). Talisse further observes that Rawlsian public reason "has it that even a knockdown argument for moral proposition, *p*, is not sufficient to show that all instantiations of the belief not-*p* are unreasonable" (2006, p. 112).

[63] In a much debated footnote, Rawls claims that "any reasonable balance" of political values raised by the issue of abortion "will give a woman a duly qualified right to decide whether or not to end her pregnancy during the first trimester" (1993, fn., p. 243). However, it is doubtful whether Rawls is correct in assuming that the terms of public reason alone are sufficient to settle the debate between the pro-life and pro-choice camps without invoking controversial metaphysical premises (see Neal 2012).

also claims that, because Deweyan democracy allegedly runs afoul of Rawls's reasonable rejectability test, pragmatists who want to theorize democracy "must" abandon Dewey's philosophy—*even if it is true*. Now, there often are good, moral and pragmatic reasons for Deweyans to make concessions to other reasonable views before enacting a law or policy. Such concessions, however, should emerge from actual deliberations in which citizens' views are given the chance to shift and evolve. As Matthew Festenstein has remarked, "the reasonable rejectability test is the kind of *a priori* epistemic constraint on inquiry that the pragmatist rejects" (2010, p. 42).

Further, the appeal to reasons everyone can *in principle* accept (a necessary conceit for the Rawlsian public reason liberal, given the impossibility of *actual* consensus on justificatory reasons) tempts us to substitute a philosophical abstraction for flesh and blood persons—it tempts us to substitute the "problems of philosophers" for the "problems of men" (Dewey *MW* 10, p. 46). To the extent that public reason liberals turn away from the plurality of reasons citizens actually have and deal only with reasons citizens *would* share under certain idealized conditions, they solve the problem of pluralism in theory without touching the real difficulties of living in a diverse and non-ideal society where many groups of citizens are marginalized and oppressed. Moreover, the public reason requirement encourages us to disengage with fellow citizens we deem unreasonable, either dismissing them entirely or patronizingly idealizing away their alleged epistemic defects. Deweyan democracy, by contrast, encourages us to treat all others (and perhaps especially some who seem unreasonable) as free and equal participants in shaping a shared future. When we dismiss deep differences of perspective as unreasonableness, we foreclose the possibility of enlarging our own conceptual horizons and seeing things anew—that is, we foreclose opportunities for growth.

The foregoing considerations demonstrate that Talisse cannot consistently appeal to the reasonable rejectability test as a means to undermine Deweyan democracy, even if it were a form of perfectionist politics (and it is not), while maintaining his commitment to inclusive inquiry aimed at truth. It remains to show that Talisse's theory of democracy fails on its own terms.

3.3 Folk Epistemology

Talisse fleshes out the norms underlying his conception of democracy with reference to what he dubs our "folk epistemology,"[64] which, he tells us, captures "the epistemic practices of the man-on-the-street, the pre-theoretical and intuitive epistemic commitments that are so deeply embedded in our cognitive lives that it is the task of professional epistemologists to explain them and render them systematic" (2009b, p. 45). Folk epistemology, claims Talisse, is constituted by the following five principles:

> (1) To believe some proposition, *p*, is to hold that *p* is true.
>
> (2) To hold that *p* is true is generally to hold that the best reasons support *p*.
>
> (3) To hold that *p* is supported by the best reasons is to hold that p is *assertable*.
>
> (4) To assert that *p* is to enter into a social practice of reason *exchange*.
>
> (5) To engage in social processes of reason exchange is to at least implicitly adopt certain cognitive and dispositional norms related to one's epistemic character. (Talisse 2009a, pp. 87-8; emphasis original)[65]

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[64] The term "folk epistemology" is meant to be analogous to the term "folk psychology," which refers to the "prescientific, common-sense conceptual framework that all normally socialized humans deploy in order to comprehend, predict, explain, and manipulate the behavior of humans and the higher animals" (Churchland 1994, p. 308; qtd. in Talisse 2009b, p. 45).

[65] Cf. Talisse's summary of the core commitments of Peirce's epistemology:

> (1) To believe p is to hold that p is true.
> (2) To hold that p is true is to hold that p would be able to withstand the challenge of ongoing scrutiny as new reasons, arguments and evidence are brought to bear.

So, according to Talisse, holding a belief—again, *any belief at all*—commits us to norms that bear on our epistemic character (including our readiness to engage in reason exchange, openness to disagreement, and willingness to revise our beliefs). Further, Talisse contends that a comprehensive doctrine rooted in folk epistemology would not be exclusive to any particular group or groups, because the doctrine already is implicitly accepted by anyone who takes herself to hold beliefs about anything. Such a doctrine could not be oppressive.

It is crucial, however, for Talisse's argument that the principles constituting his folk epistemology be uncontroversial. (1) and (2) seem so.[66] However, the key principle for Talisse is (3): "To hold that *p* is supported by the best reasons is to hold that p is *assertable*." This ostensibly innocent principle begins to look suspect upon examination of what Talisse means by "assertable." He claims "to assert that *p* is to *take responsibility* for *p*, to recognize the burden of justification with regard to *p*, and implicitly to offer to put one's reasons for *p* up for scrutiny if called upon to do so" (2009a, p. 102; emphasis original). For Talisse, then, we are not entitled to hold (or assert) a belief unless we can justify that belief to others who may hold contrary beliefs.

Now, it seems contestable (if not plainly wrong) to say that believing some proposition, *p*, always obligates us to assume the burden of having to publicly justify *p* whenever challenged. We often are entitled to hold beliefs, and to "assert" those beliefs, without necessarily being able

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> (3) To hold that a belief would meet such challenges is to commit to the project of justifying one's belief, what Peirce called 'inquiry.'
> (4) The project of squaring one's beliefs with reasons and evidence is an ongoing social endeavor that requires participation in a community of inquiry. (2011, pp. 519-20)

[66] Arguably, (2)'s qualification that we only *generally* hold that the best reasons support our beliefs is crucial to its being uncontroversial. Sometimes Talisse drops the qualification, though, as when he writes, "To say that a proposition is true is to say that it will square ultimately with the best reasons, evidence, and argument" (2009a, p. 92). This way of putting the point appears problematic, since a belief could have the "best" reasons, evidence, and argument going for it, and yet be false—that is, unless "best" is given a question-begging definition. Note, however, that the qualifier "generally" in (2) breaks the chain of entailment from believing *p* to holding that *p* is assertable.

to provide anyone else our evidence or reasons for them.[67] For instance, most of us have beliefs obtained in epistemically responsible ways but for which we have forgotten the reasons that originally caused us to form them. Alvin Goldman offers the following commonplace example:

> Last year, Sally read a story about the health benefits of broccoli in the 'Science' section of the New York Times. She then justifiably formed a belief in broccoli's beneficial effects. She still retains this belief but no longer recalls her original evidential source (and has never encountered either corroborating or undermining sources). Nonetheless, her broccoli belief is still justified, and, if true, qualifies as a case of knowledge. (2001, p. 280)

Not only are we entitled to hold some (perhaps many) beliefs for which we no longer have access to the relevant evidence or supporting reasons, pragmatists especially should recognize that many of our deepest commitments are formed through non-rational processes like acculturation and thus cannot sustain the sort of justificatory burden Talisse and Misak demand of them. As Jeffrey Stout notes, we are "entitled to hold onto commitments of this kind unless they prove problematical in some way" (2004, p. 88).

It is, then, reasonable to reject the claim that to believe *p* is to hold that *p* is assertable in the strong sense in which assertability requires us to assume an unbearably heavy burden of justification. Thus Talisse's folk epistemology is reasonably rejectable; it is not acceptable from the perspective of all, or even most, reasonable comprehensive doctrines. Indeed, Talisse's characterization of assertability is one that, arguably, Peirce himself (and certainly Dewey)

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[67] I am reminded of a passage in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. When called upon to offer reasons for his belief that "poets lie too much," Zarathustra offers what I take to be a perfectly legitimate (though a bit ostentatious) response: "'You ask why?" he says, "I am not one of those whom one may ask about their why. Is my experience but of yesterday? It was long ago that I experienced the reasons for my opinions. Should I not have to be a barrel of memory if wanted to carry my reasons around with me?" (pp. 238-9).

would reject. Again, for Peirce (as for Dewey), a belief is a habit of action,[68] and inquiry only begins when our beliefs are frustrated by recalcitrant experience. As Peirce puts it, "the mere putting of a proposition into the interrogative form does not stimulate the mind to any struggle after belief. There must be a real and living doubt, and without this all discussion is idle" (1877, p. 42).

Further, even if we were to grant Talisse's characterization of our folk epistemic commitments, it still would not follow that "only in a democracy can an individual practice proper epistemic agency" (2009a, p. 121). Living up to our epistemic norms, for Talisse (as for Misak), requires the background conditions that characterize democracy, particularly "those institutions associated with the First Amendment of the United States Constitution" (p. 123). He thus claims that "democracy is the political entailment—indeed the political *manifestation*—of the folk epistemic commitments each of us already endorses" (p. 106; emphasis original). But consider an enlightened monarch, who says, "*Argue as much as you want about whatever you want but obey!*" (Kant 1784, p. 152; emphasis original). The epistemic norms Talisse articulates are compatible not only with democracy, but also with a constitutional monarchy that protects freedom of thought and expression while denying its citizens voting rights. A culture that embraces the free exchange of ideas is, in principle, separable from the core democratic principle of collective power sharing. Recently Talisse has acknowledged the force of this objection. He concedes that "it seems consistent with pragmatist epistemology for one to regard one's fellow believers as consultants, whose arguments and objections have merely *recommendatory* force, rather than as *political equals* who are entitled to *equal* political power and *equal* influence over political decision" (Talisse 2014a, p. 128; emphasis original).

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[68] "The feeling of believing is a more or less sure indication of there being established in our nature some habit which will determine our actions" (Peirce 1877, p. 41).

Gesturing toward a response to this line of argument, Talisse suggests that "in order for inquiry to truly commence, the upshot of inquiry must have political force, and the way to ensure that inquiry has such force is to give to all believers an equal vote" (p. 128). But this response is inadequate. Even if it were true that the upshot of "genuine" inquiry must have political force, I see no successful *epistemic* argument for giving all believers an *equal* vote. Why not endorse John Stuart Mill's "epistocracy of the educated" (to borrow David Estlund's term[69]) and follow his anti-democratic suggestion that, to guard against the danger of "too low a standard of political intelligence" (1861, p. 473), we award extra votes to well-educated citizens?

According to Mill, "though every one ought to have a voice—that every one should have an equal voice is a totally different proposition" (p. 473). He thus rejects the key democratic principle of "one person, one vote," which he characterizes as the pernicious creed that "ignorance [is] entitled to as much political power as knowledge" (p. 478). Further, Mill claims that the uneducated would agree that their own views on political matters are less valid than those of well-educated elites. He reasons that while nobody would want no say in his own affairs, when "his concern is also partly another's, and he feels the other to understand the subject better ... that the other's opinion should be counted for more than his own accords with his expectations" (p. 474). Indeed, Talisse's epistemic perfectionism strongly suggests that we should be prepared to suspend our own beliefs unless they have been validated by those who have been properly educated in the cognitive virtues.

Interestingly, Talisse discusses Mill's weighted voting scheme as an illustration of a policy that would fail Rawls's reasonable rejectability test (2011, p. 513). David Estlund likewise argues that it would be "reasonable" to reject "any educational criterion for extra votes on the

[69] For a discussion, see Estlund 2008, pp. 206-22.

grounds that there might be epistemic value in the perspective of the (relatively) disenfranchised people" (2008, p. 219). Even if we were to construe this as a purely epistemic response rather than a moral response (insofar as the Rawlsian notion of reasonableness includes a moral sense of fairness and a recognition of others as free and equal (Rawls 1993, pp. 48-54)), in appealing to the reasonable rejectability test it runs afoul of the "Peircean" epistemology Talisse and Misak endorse. Although Talisse makes much of his claim that folk/Peircean epistemology provides a justification for democracy that is not reasonably rejectable, the reasonable rejectability test does not (and *should not*) play a role *within* the epistemic and deliberative practices he and Misak champion. Thus Talisse cannot appeal to the reasonable rejectability test to block specific policy proposals, such as giving more votes to better educated or more epistemically virtuous citizens.

The question to ask with respect to Talisse's view is not whether Mill's weighted voting scheme is reasonably rejectable, but whether such a scheme is compatible with a perfectionist state that has the authority to enact laws and policies for the purpose of cultivating in its citizens the virtues necessary to live up to the norms implicit in its citizens' core epistemic commitments (or Talisse's characterization of them). And, again, it seems consistent with "folk epistemology" for elites to take into account the perspectives of the "(relatively) disenfrachised," thus harnessing whatever "epistemic value" they might contribute, without granting them equal political power.

I do not see how Talisse or Misak could respond effectively to Mill's argument for elitism without appealing to some (non-epistemic) *moral* principle. In fact, Misak concedes that it can be "conducive to truth seeking" to give "extra weight to the opinions of some" (2000, p. 135). For example, we rightly "give extra weight to physicists in questions of physics" (Misak 2000, p. 135). And since science (narrowly construed) provides the model of proper inquiry for

Peirce, Misak, and Talisse, Mill's epistocracy of the educated looks more like the political manifestation of their epistemology than a democracy that embraces equal participation rights. Thus, despite its egalitarian aspirations, in the last analysis Talisse's epistemic perfectionism lends itself to authoritarian elitism.

4 Respecting Pluralism

Talisse presents his and Misak's views as a shared vision for an inclusive ideal of deliberative democracy in which all citizens are free to exercise their full epistemic agency, participating in the debates and decisions that will affect them. Dewey would approve of this hope for our future. However, the problem with letting narrowly epistemic norms do all the heavy lifting is that we live in a world where significant economic and social obstacles stand in the way of realizing Misak and Talisse's egalitarian aspirations. If we conceive of political decisions as aiming at truth instead of at collectively shaping our shared future, sooner or later expediency is likely to tempt us to work around rather than work with the marginalized and oppressed. One might respond by insisting that deliberation will yield strong rights of inclusion. But Talisse's epistemic deliberativism methodologically blocks us from prejudging the results of actual inquiry. Moreover, since inquiry never comes to an end, any agreed upon rights of inclusion could always be subject to revision or elimination in the light of further deliberation and evidence.

By contrast, Dewey's moral and political philosophy highlights the need to develop a widespread culture oriented toward both personal and social growth. Racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and other structural inequalities undermine the democratic ideal of inclusivity Dewey shares with Misak and Talisse. Confronting these challenges will require more than a readiness to participate in "reason" exchange. It will require a willingness to open

ourselves to transformative interactions across differences, interactions that include reason exchange, but which also involve holistically taking up the perspectives of unfamiliar peoples (whether or not we see them as our epistemic equals) in their cognitive *and affective* richness, if only imaginatively.

4.1 The Limitations of Epistemology

Misak and Talisse fail to appreciate the inherent conservatism of pragmatist psychology and epistemology. For both Peirce and Dewey, inquiry only begins when one of our existing beliefs runs up against an obstacle in lived experience. However, because of the privileged position of, say, affluent heterosexual white males in our society, any racist, sexist, homophobic, or classist beliefs they may hold are rarely experienced as problematic. Further, the internalization of oppression often leaves members of subjugated groups unable to articulate arguments to counter attitudes and beliefs rooted in prejudice. Because these beliefs largely go unchallenged, powerful elites are left free to exclude whole groups of people from full membership in the democratic community. Misak and Talisse do not offer a compelling account of how we might counter these exclusions. By contrast, Dewey's conception of the democratic way of life as constitutive of personal and social growth lends moral depth to the ideal of an inclusive community of equals. It helps us see the imperative of overcoming social and economic obstacles to full participation.

If we think of democratic deliberation as a narrowly scientific form of inquiry, as Misak and Talisse do, then, when we are not convinced by other people's arguments to substitute their beliefs for ours, we are unlikely to be motivated to understand how they could hold such different beliefs in the first place, how their experiences must have been different from ours, and what effects those experiences have had in shaping their worldviews. We all suffer from what

William James calls "a certain blindness in human beings" (1899, p. 121). Depending on our own (inter alia) race-, gender-, or class-inflected experiences, different propositions will be taken as live options. Achieving mutual understanding, as Dewey appreciates, requires empathy as well as reason. Without a prior ethico-social openness to difference, we will not be in a position to recognize other people's experiential evidence as evidence at all.

For moral or political deliberation to get any traction, the participants must begin from a place of mutual recognition and understanding. As Iris Young observes, however, in pluralistic societies like ours, citizens "face serious divergences in value premises, cultural practices, and meanings, and these disparities bring conflict, insensitivity, insult, and misunderstanding" (Young 2000, p. 75). Thus, a precondition for the sort of productive reason exchange Talisse and Misak recommend is a willingness on the part of citizens to expand their own normative and conceptual horizons by opening themselves up to transformative interactions across difference—that is, a willingness to open themselves to *personal growth*. Interestingly, Young recommends storytelling as one means of communicating our situated values, culture, and meanings across difference. Whether it is through face-to-face encounters (Dewey) or reading widely (Rorty), both Dewey and Rorty agree with Young that, by familiarizing themselves with others' experiences, "outsiders may come to understand why insiders value what they value and why they have the priorities they have" (Young 2000, p. 75). Significantly, we can come to understand and appreciate others' values, cultures, and meanings without accepting that their beliefs are true or even justified (for "us").

I do not see how Misak or Talisse could explain why, if our democratic deliberations aim at "truth," we should talk with people whose most central beliefs are not live options for us. But it is important to see that, even in the absence of agreement, learning to take up the perspective

of the other can affect the outcome of our deliberations. Specifically, building bridges across difference can allow for conciliatory political responses to the claims of others in a way that a politics oriented toward truth cannot; it can foster the mutual respect and trust necessary to make compromises for the sake of a more inclusive good—that is, it can foster *social growth*.

4.2 Equality

Most fundamentally, the problem with Talisse's approach to a pragmatist philosophy of democracy is that it does not motivate the basic democratic requirement that we treat each other as moral equals, as citizens whose voices and perspectives are *worth* fully taking into account in making decisions which will shape a shared future. Indeed, at key moments in their respective arguments, both Misak and Talisse appeal to the ostensibly moral ideal of equality. For Talisse, "the activities of believing and asserting require us to acknowledge each other as *equal participants* in the epistemic enterprise of justification" (2009, p. 124; emphasis original). But he claims that "this inclusiveness is not based on a *moral* requirement to extend a respectful ear to all;" rather, "its motivation is fully *epistemic*" (p. 124; emphasis original). It is not clear, however, where Talisse is drawing the distinction between equal participation as a moral requirement and equal participation as a merely epistemic requirement in this passage.

The notion that we have a duty to treat all our fellow citizens as *epistemic* peers seems highly implausible. When someone asserts a belief, my contrary belief may not be shaken if I take my interlocutor to be "deluded, in the grip of an incoherent or false ideology, or just not very wise" (Misak 2000, p. 125). Talisse is rightly suspicious of beliefs of the form, "*Having consulted only those who also believe that* p*, and having considered only those reasons that confirm that* p*, I believe that* p" (p. 124; emphasis original). By contrast, beliefs of the form, "*Having consulted only experts with regard to* p*, and having considered only reasons judged*

pertinent by those experts, I believe that p," seem epistemically unobjectionable. If *p* is a belief about a law that would affect experts and non-experts alike, however, then it would be *morally* objectionable not to consider countervailing reasons offered by anyone who would be affected, including non-experts.

Misak's discussion of equality is more developed than Talisse's. She points to separate epistemic and moral "levels" of argument for why each of us should listen to others. At the epistemic level, I should favor inclusivity because "I can learn from others and enhance my truth-seeking capabilities" (2000, p. 125). At the moral level, though, "I ought to listen to others," not for any epistemic reason, but "because that is how one ought to treat people—with consideration and respect" (p. 125). Again, unlike Talisse, Misak ultimately recognizes that when we cannot regard other individuals or groups as our epistemic equals, our only motivation for listening to them is the duty to treat them as our moral equals.

In addition to the moral level, Misak also mentions a third, political, level of argument for equality. Misak observes that decisions which are the upshot of inclusive deliberations "are more likely to be taken to be legitimate" (p. 125). Further, she claims that this political argument "can be in play even when we do not stand to learn from others" (p. 125). Although Misak is right that it matters whether those affected by a law view it as legitimate, it seems to me that the explanation for this goes back to the argument from *moral* equality. After all, southern slave owners did not much care whether blacks had "taken to be legitimate" laws designating them chattel property. As a group, slave owners regarded as legitimate laws allowing them to own others—others who were believed to be intellectually and morally inferior and thus deemed unworthy of epistemic, moral, or political consideration.

Only the recognition of all races as *moral* equals gives whites, who maintain cultural

hegemony and continue to hold disproportionate political power, sufficient motivation to take into account the experiences and perspectives of different racial groups when making political decisions. For, acceptance of the epistemic equality of minority groups without acceptance of their moral equality would not motivate whites—who, after all, continue to benefit from institutionalized racism—to take up minorities' problems as problems for themselves. Hence, as Gerald Gaus rightly observes, "Although Misak often writes as if it is her [Peircean epistemology] that is the main support for her democratic egalitarianism, to a surprising extent it derives from a much more traditional idea—that morality requires that we treat others with consideration and respect" (p. 799).

4.3 Justification for Democracy or Democracy for Justice?

At this point it is worth stressing an important difference between Dewey's approach to the philosophy of democracy and Misak and Talisse's shared approach. Misak and Talisse treat the question of legitimacy as fundamental to democratic theory, while Dewey is more interested in the question of how to ameliorate concrete injustices. For Dewey, the justification for or legitimacy of the democratic form of government is not seriously in question—at least not in the Western world—and therefore does not warrant the attention it has received from Anglophone political philosophers. By focusing on the problem of legitimacy, liberal political theory abstracts away from the history of racism, sexism, homophobia, and class conflict, thereby obscuring the structural injustices that pervert our democracy.

Interestingly, though Misak and Talisse claim to offer a response to illiberal anti-democrats like Carl Schmitt (or individuals considering anti-democratic actions[70]), in the end

[70] In a response to critics, Talisse says that his arguments in *Democracy and Moral Conflict* "are aimed explicitly at those who already have democratic commitments, but are considering abandoning them in favor of some non-democratic means of social change" (2014b, p 44).

Misak, at least, is content to address only those of us who are already committed to democracy.[71] Ultimately Misak is satisfied if "we can *give ourselves* reasons" (p. 46; emphasis original) for endorsing democratic politics. But insofar as "we" already are committed democrats, such reasons are superfluous to any genuine inquiry since, as Peirce points out, "the settlement of opinion is the sole end of inquiry" (1877, p. 42). It seems, then, that Dewey's question about how a more fully democratic way of life can address concrete injustices is, from a pragmatist perspective, the far more interesting and urgent question. Talisse's argument for an epistemic perfectionist conception of democracy, by contrast, is addressed to the academic problem of how to construct a justification of democracy that is not reasonably rejectable.

Recall that the problem arises for Talisse because, as Rawls observes, the use of reason under free liberal democratic institutions leads to "a plurality of moral conflicts," some of which, Talisse claims, "will engage the values and commitments that citizens take to be *fundamental* and hence non-negotiable" (2009, p. 35; emphasis original). Such moral conflicts threaten to undermine the Rawlsian conception of democratic legitimacy, which requires that "democratic decisions be justifiable to all citizens" (p. 19). Talisse takes the debate over abortion rights to be a case in point. He writes,

> pro-life citizens see legal abortion as the state-sponsored murder of innocent citizens, and they hold that a government that does not protect the lives of its innocent citizens is *ipso facto* illegitimate; pro-choice citizens see legalized abortion as necessary for the liberty and equality of women, and they hold that a government that fails to secure these goods for all its citizens thereby loses its claim to legitimacy. (p. 36)

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[71] Misak says that "in answering the question 'who is the "we" in the slogan "truth is what we would agree upon"?', we shall want to disqualify some from that group." "The Schmittian who refuses to take seriously the experience of the other introduces one kind of situation in which we need not talk and we need not deliberate" (Misak 2000, p. 148).

Talisse's answer to the problem raised by such conflicts is his contention that our folk epistemology commits us to democratic politics even when our fundamental values are at stake. As I argued above, his account of our folk epistemology is reasonably rejectable and therefore cannot meet his high standard for democratic legitimacy. Nevertheless, it is worth looking more closely at the example of abortion, both in order to put the problem Talisse identifies into perspective and to contrast his approach to democratic theory with the Deweyan approach I have defended throughout this dissertation.

Although it is true that some pro-life citizens deny the legitimacy of a government which fails to protect the lives of fetuses, and it also is true that some pro-choice citizens deny the legitimacy of a government which fails to secure abortion rights for women, these are extreme positions held by very few individuals.[72] In fact, many hold nuanced—and, indeed, *ambivalent*—views on abortion. This ambivalence may be a consequence of holding together multiple and conflicting identities (Catholic and feminist, say). In a recent poll conducted by the political website *Vox*, 18 percent of respondents identify as *both* pro-choice *and* pro-life while another 21 percent identify as neither (Kliff 2015). This result calls into question the binary way the issue is usually discussed, which assumes an individual must be *either* for abortion rights *or* against them. The same poll also highlights the effects that framing has on how individuals report their views on an issue. For example, 28 percent agreed with the statement, "Abortion should be legal in almost all cases," while 37 percent agreed with the statement, "Women should have a legal right to safe and accessible abortion in almost all cases" (Kliff 2015). Both statements have identical policy implications, but the latter underscores the fact that actual women are directly

[72] For those who do hold such positions, I would argue that they are entitled to tolerance (up to the point where their extreme views motivate them to harm others) but not deference. The legitimacy of our political system cannot be held hostage to extremists.

involved in abortion decisions.

The nine point difference in support for relatively robust abortion rights, depending on how the question is asked, points toward the complexity, fluidity, and ambivalence of even our strongly held beliefs.[73] Reporting on the poll results, Sarah Kliff writes, "We've framed our abortion debate all wrong. It isn't black and white—it's thousands of different shades of gray that exist somewhere in the middle. This matters because by ignoring that gray space, we miss something important: there are abortion policies that a majority of Americans could agree on" (2015). For example, the poll found widespread agreement, even among individuals who personally oppose abortion, that women who decided to terminate their pregnancy should have access to an abortion provider, and that the experience should be comfortable, supportive, and nonjudgmental.[74] On the other side, Gallop finds that 80 percent of respondents agree that third trimester abortions should be illegal in most cases (Saad 2013).

The lesson I take from these results is not that democracy has a legitimation crisis which needs to be resolved but rather that we are doing democracy wrong—or, at least, we could be doing it better. Too often we allow the most extreme views to dominate public discourse (no doubt due, at least in part, to their simplicity and internal coherence), leaving potential points of agreement unexplored. If instead we created space in the public sphere to explore the multiplicity and complexity of our views, the ambivalence ordinary citizens experience in navigating an ever-shifting and pluralistic moral and political landscape, we would be better able to take control of our shared destinies and construct a more inclusive community. Rather than ceding our national dialogues to purists vilifying and talking past each other, imagine what we could achieve if we

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[73] More than three quarters of those polled said they held their views on abortion strongly (Kliff 2015).

[74] "Seventy-two percent want the experience to be comfortable. Seventy-three percent want it to be supportive, and 74 percent want it to be nonjudgmental. Most Americans (70 percent) think women shouldn't have to travel more than 60 miles to obtain an abortion" (Kliff 2015).

opened ourselves to transformative engagements across difference—engagements that do not aim at overcoming all differences or arriving at a single truth that would forever withstand scrutiny, but at understanding, accommodating, and even celebrating differences. Only then can we meet the task of democracy as Dewey articulates it, the "creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute" (Dewey *LW* 14, p. 230).

Although no system of government can deliver only laws, policies, and institutions that no reasonable citizen would reject, Dewey helps us see that a healthy democracy should not be alienating, even for the individuals and groups who do not get their way on a particular issue. We have a moral right to contribute to the development of the social and political institutions that, in turn, affect the direction of our own personal development. Reciprocally, attending to the growth of the self (where "growth" is understood in a way that does not insist on unification or internal coherence) increases our value for democracy by developing our capacities for adaptive and ameliorative transactions with our (pluralistic) social and physical environments.

Contrary to Talisse's charge that the Deweyan democrat seeks to coerce others into adopting her own ideal of human flourishing, Dewey's conception of growth does not specify in advance any particular form our development (either as individuals or as a society) must take, except to note that our growth should be directed in ways that will allow still more growth. Thus Dewey does not specify a substantive conception of the good that a state could legislate or institutionalize to the exclusion of other goods. For Dewey, growth is a continuous process with no fixed end other than more growth. To define the end of growth in advance of further development would foreclose unanticipated possibilities, leaving us unable to adapt to future contingencies. Dewey's refusal to specify a fixed end for growth reflects his view that our "ends" must be defined provisionally, relative to felt needs which emerge in interactions with our

physical and social environments (including interactions with our fellow citizens). On my reading, Deweyan democracy is a personal ideal for effective bottom-up citizenship rather than a blueprint for instituting a top-down political order. Thus Talisse's diagnosis of Deweyan democracy as promoting the use of coercive state power in the service of a narrow and reasonably rejectable conception of the good misses its mark.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In the last chapter I argued against Talisse's claim that Deweyan democracy constitutes a moral comprehensive doctrine that would allow states to institute coercive laws and policies in order to foster reasonably rejectable values and attitudes. The vision of democracy and democratic citizenship I have urged takes seriously John Dewey's claim that democracy is, most fundamentally, a personal ideal for effective citizenship rather than a system of laws and institutions. Although Deweyan democracy does not entail the top-down perfectionism Talisse suggests it does, I have been arguing throughout this dissertation that, despite its attractions, the specific conception of human flourishing or "growth" underpinning Dewey's own theory of democracy, in fact, is *not* compatible with the radical pluralism characteristic of contemporary liberal democratic culture. More specifically, I have argued that insofar as Dewey conceives of growth as the progressive unification of differences, his ideal of human flourishing tempts us to exclude or marginalize rather than cooperate with individuals and groups whose experiences cannot be assimilated to those of the hegemonic majority.

Dewey suggests that minority groups would not merely integrate with or be excluded from a preexisting society, but instead, through cross-difference transactions, would help reweave the social fabric into a new, more complex, but nevertheless harmonious pattern. This is a beautiful image, but it fails to account for histories of violence and subjugation that have contributed to the identity formations of conflicting groups. Dewey's pluralism is predicated on the hope that our conflicting beliefs and values ultimately can be resolved into a greater unity—a unity that includes difference, but only to the extent that our differences can be made to compliment each other (like the different colors and textures that make a beautiful tapestry). This

is where John Rawls's observation that a plurality of incompatible systems of beliefs and values is an ineliminable feature of free democratic societies presses hard against the Deweyan democrat committed to an ideal of growth conceived as an always unifying process.

To be sure, insofar as it emphasizes the interrelatedness of individual development and social progress, Deweyan growth compellingly addresses the important question of how diverse citizens can live together well. Dewey's conception of growth thus provides a crucial starting point for the development of an adequate ideal of democratic citizenship. Because Dewey's understanding of growth-as-unification is inadequate to radically pluralistic democratic societies like ours, however, I have offered a reconstruction of Deweyan growth that views divisions within the self and between citizens not merely problems always to overcome, but as potential resources for creating a stronger, more inclusive democracy.

I began my reconstructive effort in chapter one by drawing on the work of Chicana feminists Gloria Anzaldúa and María Lugones, who help us see that the openness and flexibility (or "plasticity," to use Dewey's term) characteristic of intersectional subjects (individuals who embrace multiple and conflicting group-associated identities) fosters community building across differences. Intersectional subjects such as Anzaldúa and Lugones, whose Latina and lesbian identities conflict in important respects, are able to forge deep connections with oppositionally situated groups, thus promoting cooperative political activism, despite historical antagonisms that otherwise would foreclose such possibilities. By embracing oppositionally constructed identities implicated in both sides of historical violence and subjugation, a plural self is well positioned to diffuse longstanding animosities that divide citizens from one another. A plural self, therefore, is especially well-suited to promote the social trust necessary to motivate an inclusive effort to challenge systems of oppression that undermine our democratic way of life.

For Anzaldúa and Lugones, the process of negotiating between their own conflicting identities does not aim primarily at dissolving disagreement but at attenuating entrenched resentments, thereby opening the possibility of flexible and productive interaction both within themselves and between them and the different groups with whom they identify.

Building on the groundwork laid by Anzaldúa and Lugones, in chapter two I turned to neopragmatist Richard Rorty's conception of the liberal ironist as a model for the plural self and for personal growth. In Rorty's terminology, a "person" is a constituted by a "vocabulary" in which a coherent set of beliefs and desires is inscribed. Following Dewey's social pragmatism, Rorty understands a vocabulary to be a product of our acculturation to a group. And because most of us are acculturated into a number of different and sometimes conflicting groups, a single self can contain a plurality of "persons." By cultivating a plural self, we gain the capacity to create ironic distance from each of our vocabularies, play them off each other, and thus to take control of our own self-development, or growth. For Rorty, then, the internalization of multiple identities is necessary for self-creation. The tensions between our multiple selves provide toeholds for creative problem solving and give us the means to achieve personal growth. This notion of personal growth illuminates a positive structural role for difference in a way that Dewey's focus on unification obscures.

Despite its advantages over Dewey's ideal of the unifying self, I identified two problems with Rorty's liberal ironist as a model of the plural self. First, though the ironist's ability to identify with conflicting perspectives allows for a richer self-conception, Rorty restricts ironism to our private lives, thereby denying it a meaningful social or political function. Second, Rorty's endorsement of ironism implies detached, insincere "play" that is incompatible with the serious work of ameliorating social injustices. By contrast, Anzaldúa and Lugones endorse ambivalence

as begetting an inherently engaged, sincere, and serious attitude that can serve to foster political solidarity across social differences.

Although Rorty denies that his ideal of the plural self has any political utility, I have argued that if we replace his private/public dichotomy with Dewey's private-public continuum and replace Rorty's notion of ironism with Anzaldúa and Lugones's conception of ambivalence, the plural self's significance for social progress comes into focus. This view of the plural self combines the strengths of Dewey's and Rorty's conceptions of the ideal citizen/self while setting aside their respective anti-democratic elements. By making meaningful connections with multiple and conflicting group-specific identities, an ambivalent democratic citizen/self can effectively work toward personal growth and social progress through transformative interactions with oppositionally situated individuals and groups.

By bringing Anzaldúa, Lugones, and Rorty together with Dewey, I hope to have vindicated a Deweyan ideal of democratic citizenship rooted in a *reconstructed* conception of growth that accommodates internal divisions and ambiguity. If we allow ourselves to be guided by this ideal, I believe we can begin healing the mutual animosity and suspicion that characterize our society today, and which make it nearly impossible to foster the social trust necessary to address meaningfully the many problems confronting our community. On my proposal, effective citizenship under the conditions of a pluralistic society like ours requires us to open ourselves to transformative interactions across difference, to enlarge ourselves by acquiring a broader range of identities—including, inevitably, some conflicting identities. The tensions between conflicting identities reflect the inevitable conflicts between groups within a liberal democratic society. But, by sustaining and negotiating conflicts within ourselves, as individual citizens we will be better able to negotiate conflicts between ourselves and other individuals and groups.

Finally, in the third chapter, I considered the recent influential argument presented by Robert Talisse, who claims that pragmatists must abandon Deweyan democracy in favor of a narrowly epistemic form of perfectionism inspired by the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce. If Talisse's argument were successful, it would undermine my project of articulating and defending a reconstructed version of Deweyan democracy. With fellow Peircean pragmatist Cheryl Misak, Talisse claims that only a view of democracy which rests on purely epistemic norms everyone already implicitly accepts is able both to respect pluralism and to commit us all to political democracy. Talisse argues that Deweyan democracy, by contrast, constitutes a form of moral perfectionism that does not respect the fact of reasonable pluralism. As I demonstrated, however, Deweyan democracy is not a blueprint for instituting a top-down political order; rather, it is best understood as a personal ideal for effective bottom-up citizenship. Further, I hope to have shown that, in contrast to Deweyan democracy, Misak's and Talisse's epistemic perfectionisms are insufficient to motivate a collective effort to achieve and sustain a robust and flourishing democratic society.

Again, though Talisse wrongly characterizes Deweyan democracy as promoting state coercion in the service of a narrow conception of the good (namely, growth), it nonetheless is true that Dewey's ideal of growth-as-unification is problematic insofar as it tempts us to exclude or marginalize those who cannot be integrated with the larger community. If the argument of this dissertation has been successful, however, it should be clear that my reconstruction of Deweyan democracy is not vulnerable to such criticism. My vision of Deweyan democracy is rooted in an ideal of citizenship that fosters growth not only in its toleration of deep and persistent divisions between groups, but also in its appreciation for the powerful democratic potential of cultivating a plural *self* by internalizing the perspectives of multiple (and sometimes conflicting) groups.

The reconstructed conception of growth which has emerged from the foregoing inquiries is morally substantive in that it orients democratic citizens toward open and respectful engagement across difference. And yet, despite its moral substance, my reconstructed conception of growth is not objectionably coercive. It encompasses the core democratic (and intrinsically moral) values of freedom, equality, and recognition of and respect for difference. In growing, we enhance our powers for coping with and transforming our complex and always changing physical and social environments, thereby increasing our individual and collective freedom. Further, the moral ideal of growth expresses the "democratic faith in human equality," which Dewey describes as the "belief that every human being, independent of the quality or range of his personal endowment, has the right to equal opportunity with every other person for the development of whatever gifts he has" (LW 14, p. 226-7). Indeed, because we grow, in large measure, through cross-difference transactions, our own growth is enhanced when everyone fully enjoys the opportunity to develop her unique capacities as well.

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